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LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY.

M.DCCC.XXXI.

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&c.

DURING the two last centuries Europe has been dazzled and deceived by plausible arguments in favour of a supposed balance of power. This has been the pretext of every war, and the mask of every treaty of peace : it has been the apology for political robbery, and the excuse for diplomatic artifice. It may be worth while to enquire, how a principle which professes to be so agreeable to the spirit of public justice, and so essential to the national security of the various members of the European family, has so signally failed of its effect.

In the first place, it must be observed, that the will to desire, and the power to establish a political equality, which has not hitherto existed, presupposes a degree of public virtue and of strength, which have rarely been found united. It is not too much to say, that the natural tendency of the possession of a power of such magnitude, is to counteract such generous feelings as would suggest the principle of an equipoise, the advantages of which would be principally directed against itself. Without going deeply into historical details, it

may be asserted, that the principle of a balance of power has never as yet been fairly acted on in any of the great public transactions of Europe; or at least on so small a scale, that its benefits have not been obvious. No wonder then that it should have fallen into disrepute, that it should be regarded at last rather as an Utopian speculation than a principle of public policy, and abandoned to theoretical rather than practical statesmen. It has so often been put forward, only to be violated, that Europe has begun to regard it with suspicion as a prelude to an unjust war, or an insidious treaty.

The very idea of creating a balance between bodies not yet in equilibrio, supposes concession on one side and advantage on the other; and it requires a mind above the ordinary motives of human action to yield an existing private advantage for a future public good.

Visionary, however, as it may seem to the present race of practical diplomatists and official statesmen, a really well-founded balance of strength between the existing nations of Europe would be an object worthy the attainment of the greatest Minister. I am aware that talents alone work no miracles; opportunities must present themselves for the deepest sagacity to avail itself of the results of its study and experience: but at a time when a third re-settlement of Europe appears imminent, it is incumbent on all who take an interest in its public weal, and more especially on those who direct the Councils of England, to pay a more

than usual attention to the course of foreign affairs ; and, if possible, to remedy the errors of our last generation of Statesmen.

An effective balance of power has never yet existed in Europe, mainly because it has not been founded on the basis of an equality of national strength.

The States of Europe may be called the materials of a confederacy, between which there is no common bond of acknowledged interest or obligation. History shews us, that even the greater powers are so unwilling to submit to a condition of mutual equality,—they consider every concession, even to each other, as so humiliating a sacrifice of their importance, that it is not surprising that they have usually sacrificed the smaller States to their own selfish policy. Nor have the smaller States been perfectly free from fault: their petty Sovereigns, proud of their nominal independence, and foolishly trying to magnify the provincial prejudices of their subjects into a miscalled national spirit, have usually followed servilely in the train of some greater Monarch during a war, and obstinately refused to accommodate themselves to arrangements for the public good at a peace.

No permanent balance of power can be established between the States of Europe, that has not for its basis the principle of national independence. It is in vain to weigh, to poise with the utmost nicety, the proportions of offensive and defensive force ; to deal out souls and fractions of souls ; to

endeavour to compensate for a weak and unnatural frontier in one quarter, by commercial or territorial advantages in another. There is in all nations an instinct which makes them feel when they are ill-assorted under the sceptre of a ruler who is not their natural head ; and a tendency to adjust themselves so as to unite one people under one national chief. The great secret of the comparative weakness of most of the great monarchies of the Continent, is the want of national unity, and consequently of feelings and interests among their subjects. If the expression be allowed, a State is strong only in proportion as its composition is *homogeneous* ; and that such is not the condition of the greater number of the European States, is notorious to every one.

If we pass in review the principal States of Europe, we shall see on every side proofs and illustrations of the foregoing proposition.

France is at the present moment the most united, the most compact, and most perfectly organized of the Continental States. One language, one history, one religion, and one spirit, prevail through the entire country ; the traditions of the past and the anticipations of the future, call up the same feelings in the breast of every Frenchman. Favourably placed in the midst of Europe, bounded by a well defined and easily defensible frontier ; inhabited by a people, animated with a spirit so truly national—such a nation, as long as it does its duty, is invincible. They are strong, because they

are all French and nothing but French, and united under the sway of a truly national King.

The Empire of Napoleon was three times as extensive ; but why was it not proportionally strong ? Because, that beyond the true limits of France, the people were not French, and were any thing but French.

Spain, for purposes of resistance, the legitimate object of national strength, partakes in a great degree of the same advantages. Insulated by her position, she comprehends all Spaniards within her pale ; Spanish feeling, patriotism, point to no other centre, and acknowledge no tie, but that which binds them to their mother country.

During the existence of the great Spanish Empire, the national strength, after the first impulse of conquest had subsided, was in an inverse ratio to the extent of national territory. Scattered over the North, West, and South of Europe, it gradually fell to pieces, because the great mass of Spanish subjects were *not* Spaniards.

It has been supposed that the possible union of Portugal with Spain at any period, must be detrimental to British interests, and that it is necessary for us to support Portugal, as a set off to the influence France possesses, or has possessed, in Spain. But the Peninsula, if united, (and Spain herself is but a union of petty kingdoms,) would stand, *en tiers*, between France and England, and be able to maintain itself in political independence of both powers. However, where nei-

ther princes nor people are capable of such improvement, as to make either of those two states an object of envy to the other, it seems hopeless to speculate on such a consolidation. Spain, it must be remembered, is no longer united by family interests with France, and the people detest each other.

Sweden, as Sweden, almost inattackable, lost her extensive empire south of the Baltic, because her provinces had no sound, no national connexion with the ruling country; their inhabitants were Germans, Fins, Slavonians, but *not* Swedes.

England was fortunate enough to lose her French provinces four centuries ago; will any man say that she has been weaker, as a nation, ever since?

Having thus glanced at the present condition of those States, which have formerly possessed extensive and *not* national Empires, and which, as some would say, by reverse of fortune, or as I rather would believe, by the natural course of events, have lost them; let us turn to those which hold similar Empires in actual possession, and examine, by the help of experience, their several chances of durability. We shall find the same principle of destruction at work in undermining those that exist, which has already overthrown those that are gone.

Prussia may be taken as an example of nearly every defect that can attach to a state of her

importance. Touching both France and Russia, with her frontiers, she rests on no natural outline towards the South, and is only in part backed by the sea on the North; and that, perhaps, (from other causes,) is the least secure portion of her dominions. All that she possesses beyond the Rhine and the Oder, is held by that frailest of tenures, the pleasure of her neighbours. What national feeling, what common spirit can be supposed to animate the inhabitants of Treves and Memel? what would it signify to the Duchy of Posen, if Westphalia were invaded to-morrow? Prussia is strong, only in proportion as she is German; the more she identifies herself with Germany and its interests, the better, both for herself and Europe. Let her beware of stretching her eagle wings over a French* or a Slavonic population, lest they be clipped some day, and her lofty flight be turned into a downfall. Most States could preserve themselves by a defensive system, but Prussia requires an offensive war for her own security.

Austria has the advantage of greater geographical compactness, but the composition of her subjects is, perhaps, the worst specimen of diploma-

* *Dialogue on the French and Prussian frontier near Sarrelouis.*

“ Vous êtes Français, n'est-ce pas ? ”

“ Ja, mein Herr.”

“ Und du bist ein Deutscher, nicht wahr ? ”

“ Helas ! oui, Monsieur ! ”

tic patchwork in the political map of Europe. She has, however, did she but know its value, one truly national centre and rallying point, Hungary; she ought, indeed, to have considered herself as the old kingdom of Hungary, once of considerable importance as an independent State, though always, from causes which we need not now discuss, in a backward state of civilization, which its favourable position and vicinity to Italy ought to have ameliorated. But far from cultivating the affections of the Hungarians, a people quite *sui generis*, warmly attached to their Crown and country, Austria neglected them for foreign acquisitions, which at this moment hang to her but by a thread. Galicia, Lombardy, and Venice, scarcely even profess loyalty, while the more than provincial jealousies which rankle between the Slavonic population of Bohemia and their German fellow subjects, render insecure the hereditary dominions themselves.

Russia is, after all, the most glaring instance of the misuse of great power and great advantages. Backed by deserts, communicating with the Baltic and Mediterranean, comprehending within this vast limit a tract of country at least equal in fertility to others in the same climate, with unrivalled facilities for inland navigation, and easy commercial access to the East, North, and South, with yet unfathomed resources of mines and agriculture, she possesses also a population in that middle stage of civilization, which is most docile

to the commands of power, while it is also advancing, though slowly, in the march of improvement. Considered as the empire of Muscovy, with Moscow and the real Muscovite population around it for a nucleus of national character and strength, she had ample scope for improvement in all the arts of peace, which make a nation truly happy and respectable; but the insatiable ambition of her Sovereigns has deserted that honourable path, for a career which seems to aim at boundless monarchy, and to stride, *per fas et nefas*, to its attainment.

On reviewing the history and condition of these three great empires of our day, one cannot but be struck with the fact, that whatever their strength may be, they do at the present moment grasp at more than they can hold; and that although their perfect military organization, and the Argus eyes of their diplomacy, may for a time keep up the frame work of their power, the ill-founded fabric which is based on the wrongs of millions, must, ere long, totter to the ground. As all three have built their power on the same foundation, and advanced it on the same principles, we shall discover the same faults, both radical and incidental, in all.

We may see, in the chequered and ill assorted agglomeration of petty states, and fragments of states, which they have each chained about their throne, a set of adjuncts, which, far from tending to support the main body by the attraction of a

common feeling of patriotism or respect, incline much more, by following their separate and diverging interests, to split the power of the metropolis itself at any moment of internal weakness or disunion.

It is almost as absurd to call such heterogeneous bodies by the honourable name of a nation, as to call the fortuitous assemblage of boys at a school a family; and to persuade them to consider each other as brethren, would be as difficult in one case as the other.

One of the prominent errors of each of these great powers, has been in chusing for a capital, a city not in the centre, or even within the nucleus, of their national population. Dazzled by the splendour of the Empire of Germany, Austria has preferred Vienna, which is the centre of no country, to Buda, which is in the midst of the most faithful and powerful of her subjects. Prussia, which might have selected any one of her numerous commercial towns, has chosen to elevate Berlin, (and failed in elevating Potsdam,) both in the poorest district of her kingdom, in preference to Magdeburg, seated on the banks of the finest river in Germany, conveniently placed at equal distance from the too distant extremities of her dominions, and admirably situated for a national capital, at least, of the North, or eventually of the whole of Germany.

Russia has committed the same error, in deserting her national capital for an obscure corner of

her empire, placed in the worst of her climates, and the poorest of her provinces, of which the peasantry are not even Russian.* As errors in politics usually pave the way for crimes, we see that the mistaken policy of these three great powers, in fixing the seats of their governments with-
 outside of what may be called their centre of gravity, and at a distance from the great body of their respective nations, and their resources, has, to use their usual apology, almost necessitated the seizure of some part of their neighbour's territory, as a defence for their ill situated capitals. Thus Petersburg required the occupation of Finland to protect it;† Prussia must seize a third of Poland, to cover Berlin; and Austria another third, to defend Vienna from the advances of Russia. In addition to the constant effort of compulsion necessary to hold together such millions of un-

* In justice to the character of the Czar, Peter I., the only great man Russia has yet produced, it must be acknowledged, that the prevalent opinion in Russia, is, that he never intended Petersburg for a permanent capital, but only for a great seaport. As nothing in that country is done without the eye of the master, his residence there during its formation was indispensable. His intention is said to have been to fix the capital at a town at the junction of the Volga and Oca, called Nishny; excellently situated for internal and oriental commerce, and 300 miles N. E. of Moscow. Had his successors had wisdom enough to adopt this plan, they, as well as Western Europe, might have been the better for it.

† Did it require also the occupation of the Isle of Aland, within sight of Stockholm harbour?

willing subjects, who have nothing in common with their fellow slaves but their chains, while they have infinitely more in common with such fractions of their nation as have passed under the yoke of some neighbouring tyrant, there arises a necessity of keeping a jealous watch upon each other, lest one should not scruple to possess himself of a further portion of what has been so wrongfully acquired by all. Conscious injustice can hardly be other than suspicious, both of its partners in guilt, and of its captive subjects, and, at last, becomes so, even of its own creatures and instruments. Hence the supposed, and, perhaps, real necessity for those countless armies, that profligate police, that crafty diplomacy, that financial dishonesty, those oppressive taxes, that insecurity of person and property, that love of ignorance, and that dread of truth, which distinguishes those great States, as well as smaller ones, which servilely imitate their immoral policy; and which prove, that no tyrant, be he King or Minister, for one moment feels confident of his own safety. A free and united nation can be governed and defended on a liberal system, with half the expense, less than half the cares, and with ten times more happiness and security, than the best organized of those boasted complications of state machinery. It is lamentable to reflect, during how many ages the human powers have been crushed or retarded by the exercise of such tyrannical mechanism; but it is consoling to observe, that, at the present

day, the upward resistance of the people is every where augmenting in a greater ratio than any in which their rulers can possibly increase the pressure which can be laid on them. While the people are learning much, let us hope princes will, at the same time, learn something by experience; and then, with common foresight, the two parties may meet each other, if not half way, at least in time to prevent the convulsions that must otherwise be inevitable. But it must be confessed, the present generation of Continental Sovereigns show but few signs of such wisdom; and, in many countries, even the people have much to learn before they can be said to understand either their own situation, or to be able to judge properly of the remedies to be applied to their evils, or of the safest way of applying them, so as to ensure a lasting benefit.

Two important countries, somewhat similarly circumstanced, next demand our attention—Germany and Italy. They are similarly circumstanced, inasmuch as they are inhabited, respectively, by a numerous and daily improving population, who speak one language, follow the same manners and customs, and consider themselves in each case as forming one and the same nation. I have sufficiently exposed the distinction between a *Nation* and *Power*; a distinction which every year will make more apparent. Both Italy and Germany lie at present under the disadvantage of being divided into numerous States, the most

powerful of which have other out-lying possessions of greater importance, and to which the care and attention of their rulers is more immediately directed. Neither Italy nor Germany have ever been united as they deserve to be, and many speculators have wished them to be; while others deny the capability of the two nations ever forming compact and solid monarchies, by the fusion of their yet independent parts into one homogeneous mass. It is worth while to enquire into the soundness of these opinions.

Italy has always been accused of being too susceptible of provincial jealousy and prejudice, even between the minutest divisions, ever to blend cordially one with another. It is true that such jealousy did exist to a great degree, but the overwhelming torrent of French invasion and occupation, went far to smooth down these petty differences, and to produce a common feeling throughout the peninsula. The modern division of the country into larger Principalities, has also given a greater degree of consistency and self-respect to the Italians; in which, when as formerly divided into petty oligarchical Republics, in the fall of which the warmest friends of freedom had nothing to regret, or dependent appanages of the Crowns of Spain, France, and Austria, they were lamentably deficient. The traditional glories of Rome, and the veneration still excited by the holy city, form a central point round which it would not be impossible to rally the fractions of

the Italian nation. Italy wants but the spirit of patriotism to be roused, and the mass of individual talent which it contains would speedily raise it to a level with the most respectable nations of Europe.

Germany, though equally subjected to the inconveniences of minute political division, and governed by princes who scarcely belong to her, has had yet one signal advantage over Italy in the Federative Bond of the empire. This has united the people from the earliest ages; and, though, far from perfect as a constitutional fabric, was yet so intimately connected with the history of the nation, and so interwoven with their best and most patriotic feelings, that both Napoleon, and the Conquerors who succeeded him, were obliged to keep up the semblance of it, to satisfy the cravings after nationality which demanded it. Not bounded, like Italy, by a strong natural outline, torn by various foreign interests and internal dissensions, it has still, under all its disadvantages, shewn such an intensity of national feeling and unity of character, that one cannot hesitate to admit it to one of the highest places among the nations of Europe. If its parts are not likely to be united, at least in our day, under one national head, we may, at least, assert, that, by consolidating her interests, she may maintain her respectable station in Europe. If Italy had possessed such a federative spirit, she would have exalted her character, far above her present level.

It may be thought, perhaps, too theoretical to speculate on the future re-union of these two parcelled nations; but it is necessary, in order to obtain a precise idea of the advantages to be derived from a real balance of power, as maintained between free and independent States, to picture to the imagination such possible, if not probable, combinations. Such enquiries are not without their use; they prepare the minds of those who may be in a situation to influence such measures, to consider, without alarm, changes that might at first startle their prejudices, and run counter to all their previously adopted political ideas. The great tide of revolutionary war in some degree contributed to a similar effect among the people; it compelled, on one side or the other, States that had been long inimical to each other, to adopt, for their common safety, a common and united policy. It is necessary, also, that the people themselves, whose ultimate welfare is the object of such changes and consolidations of territory, should have time to look forward to them; to lay aside their ancient jealousies, to foresee the public good that will result, and to avoid such partial distresses as the inevitable sacrifice of some local interests must otherwise create. A great step is gained, when, although divided as States, we can unite them in policy; for, by acting together, they learn, practically, their common interest. We have seen what was the strength of the united people of Germany; we have seen their

moral as well as physical force, exerted successfully in throwing off a foreign yoke; and if they have done nothing in concert since, it is that their divided condition prevents them. As they discovered their own strength when combined in war, so would they now gladly co-operate in the useful arts of peace; they would willingly enjoy the benefits of a common education, common laws, and commercial policy; and the security for all these, a liberal and uniform constitution. But all these benefits are denied them, or partially and sparingly doled out at the pleasure of their rulers. There is one thing, however, which their rulers cannot destroy, the community of language by which they interchange their common complaints, and have at last found out, that their feelings, interests, and expectations, are the same.

The possibility of an ultimate union of the Italian States under one government, is best proved by the history of Spain, a country once divided, like Italy, among many sovereigns, and in which, at this day, provincial feelings are as strongly marked as is compatible with a sincere national patriotism. Such provincial feelings, by calling forth the honest pride and self-respect of the inhabitants of the country, are productive of good, rather than harm; they turn the naturally confined principle of local attachment into a spur of emulation for the public good, or the national honour. Such is the provincialism of Britain, of Germany, and of Spain.

It is now a vast many years since any one of the States, either of Germany or Italy, has turned its arms against its neighbours of the same country, for its own aggrandizement, or otherwise than as a compulsory member of a coalition. This fact has had a salutary influence on the people, and greatly tended to remove their mutual dislikes.

Greece and Turkey, at the present day, offer the contrast of two States, one in its infancy, the other in its decrepitude, and both in a low state of civilization. It must not be overlooked, that whatever their actual condition, the Greeks are capable of improvement, which the Turks have shewn themselves not to be, and that they may, from the natural advantages of their country, become, at no distant time, important members of the European community. Their present importance, however, is derived not from themselves, but from the relation in which they stand to the greater powers of Europe. As a weak State, Greece will be in danger of becoming a mere tool in the hands of Russia, who has unscrupulously made use of their common religion, to keep up a constant system of intrigue in the country for a long series of years. If she become an active, and, in proportion to her means, a powerful State, she may be the most effectual check to Russian aggrandizement in the South, and contribute, by that means, to preserve the freedom of the Mediterranean.

Switzerland has for many years been under-

going a silent process, if not of change, at least of preparation for it. It is found that the narrow basis of the oligarchical republics of the middle ages is not suited to the more extended fabric of modern intelligence and civil liberty. When they shall have arranged the misunderstandings that have crept in among them, by enlarging the foundation of their civil liberties, they will doubtless resume their station in Europe, as guardians of the Alps. Two parties in Switzerland are calling for Reform, one which claims an extension of civil right, and another which longs to re-organize the military resources of their hardy mountaineers. The success of these principles would render Switzerland, by advancing *pari passu* with her neighbours, to meet boldly modern politics and modern tactics, and the amended confederacy would be as respectable and as effective in the nineteenth century, as in the fourteenth. Had that confederacy originally comprehended Savoy, and the Tyrol, freed from all other dominion, it would have formed a barrier that might have saved Italy and Europe an infinity of blood and treasure.

The Netherlands might have enjoyed a happier lot, had they, early in their career of commerce and prosperity, been formed into a confederation of states, like that of Switzerland; for which their differences of religion, and their municipal, if not republican institutions, would have fitted them. The union of Holland with the Southern provinces, as effected in 1815, though theoretically a

well imagined measure, took place at least two centuries too late to be of any permanent utility. Had it taken place at the period when Holland threw off the Spanish yoke, when the language, the manners, the tastes, and the arts, of the two parts of the country were nearly the same, it might have held good till now. At that time the whole country was more German, and less French, than it has been growing ever since, and the jealousies which have since arisen, had as yet no existence. But nations, like trees, must be grafted while young, for when further advanced, they refuse, without violence to nature, to adapt themselves to each other.

The Southern Provinces have now, according to their own account, made rather late, it must be confessed, the discovery that they are and have been for centuries, *a Nation*, though under what name, and with what boundaries, History or Geography does not inform us. At a loss for a national appellation, they have revived that of Belgium, as having been in use with the Romans, but perfectly unknown to modern European History, until brought out among the Classics of the Revolution. As for boundaries, every thing that suits them is a bit of Belgium. They wanted the Duchy of Luxemburg; the Congress voted it to be Belgium. They find Maastricht and Venloo necessary to them, they say they ought to be Belgium. Before the Revolution, Liege was a German Principality, part of the circle of Westphalia, but now, though

inhabited by Germans, it and its territory are discovered to be Belgium. They possess the principal parts of Flanders and Brabant, denominations better known to history than Belgium, and therefore they must have the portions that have belonged to Holland for centuries. To be consistent, they ought to require the cession of Dunkirk and French Flanders ; but their ardour has not hitherto ventured so far. The surest and most venerable bond of national union—language, they have abandoned, chusing rather to adopt a foreign tongue, than encourage the study of their own. In fact, the Flemish too nearly resembles the proscribed Dutch, to be popular just now ; but their national language it is.

It is evident, that the least result that can be expected from the late changes in that country, will be to throw the new State into the arms and interests of France ; let her nominal independence be established under what name or form she chuses. As a set-off against this effective addition to the power of France, Holland must consent to link herself more closely with Germany, and to connect her politics with those of the States East of the Rhine, as a counterpoise to those of the West. The Low German population differs little from the Dutch in dialect and manners, and many of the well wishers to their country would have preferred, in 1815, to have been united with East Friesland, rather than with Belgium.

Dependent monarchies are usually productive of

more trouble and expense, than of strength to the ruling State. Such is the case with all the dependent conquests of Russia. Belgium is too considerable to be a mere dependency of Holland, and from having always been a province of some great Power, possesses none but provincial patriotism. As to the conduct of the late disputes, where both parties so grossly mismanaged their game, there can be little interest in their investigation.

The acquisition of Algiers by France, has given umbrage to some politicians; but it would rather seem that the more completely the colonies of one great nation are separated from those of another, the less room will there be for disputes. As a naval object, it must be superior to Corsica; and, as a public good, the annihilation of a piratical State deserves the thanks of the civilized world. Russia, at least, cannot object, for the bait was once offered to England by her, but wisely declined.

It is surprising that the English nation should remain in ignorance of the jealousy and dislike which Russia bears towards it. We are considered to be the cause which has prevented her becoming mistress of Turkey and Greece, and establishing herself, at various periods, in the Mediterranean, although this latter point should concern France as much as ourselves. It is as a favour rarely granted, that any Russian subject or Polish citizen obtains leave to visit England; our liberty is thought too contagious.

The old division of interests in Europe lay between the Northern and the Southern nations, and, in consequence, for centuries we see Sweden at war with Poland, Germany with Italy, England with France, and France with Spain or Italy. But now the great barrier line of politics is to be sought between the East and the West; Russia and her neighbours form an alliance in opposition to France and her allies. Let us seek, therefore, to improve our good understanding with France, for it will always be the game of Russia to provide a quarrel for us if possible. France, it is to be hoped, sees the present state of political combinations in the same light. During the power of the Martignac Ministry in France, Russia was busily employed in intriguing with the republican party, to overthrow the interest of England. She can tolerate a liberal party, when it will become her tool. But we hope that both France and England, under new Ministers, will see through her hypocrisy, and continue in amity, in spite of her *artifices*. Offensive alliances have much that is objectionable in them, but a purely defensive one between England and France would have nothing in it that need alarm the most timid politician. And could such an alliance be cemented by a fair commercial treaty, the two nations would mutually give and receive security, as it were, to keep the peace towards each other.

Let it not be imagined that Russia, paid or unpaid, is always naturally inimical to the aggran-

dizement of France. On the contrary, provided she be allowed to run her career of ambition in the East, she would readily concede to France all her favourite objects in the West. She knows, or believes, that England alone (France being neuter) could not prevent her speedy acquisition of the rest of Poland, of Greece, and Turkey. She would indemnify Prussia by Hanover, Austria perhaps by Servia or Walachia. But the present honourable sympathy that exists between the French and the Poles, will, it is to be hoped, ensure sounder principles of policy and alliance. Let the free countenance the free, and liberty will be restored to those who have so inhumanly been deprived of it. In France, both Government and people are unanimous in favour of Poland. When has England shewn such sympathy with suffering nations? In truth, the great cause of the unpopularity of England on the Continent, is, that she will help nobody; or if she does, it seems to be indifferent whether the cause of liberty or absolutism be benefited, and this in spite of her boasted attachment to freedom. France, on the contrary, whatever party rule, stretches forth a willing hand to any friend in distress. When Spain was divided between liberty and tyranny, the absolutists got as ready assistance from France then, as the liberals would now. The liberal party have always looked to England as the protector, as well as provoker, of liberty, and they have been invariably disappointed. So that even

the speeches of Lord Holland, and Lord Brougham, proclaiming, as they do, to the world the finest principles of civil liberty, and the deepest compassion for those nations who do not enjoy them, act but as false lights, to decoy the unwary patriots of the Continent into dangers which they are left to their own resources to extricate themselves from.

It will be necessary, for several reasons, to consider the case of Poland, a little at length. From its distance from Britain, and consequently from the little communication between the two countries, as well as from several errors which the nature of its circumstances, and the spite of its enemies have helped to spread abroad, this people, their history, character, and position, are at present the least understood among us of all the nations of Europe.

Within a vast tract, bounded on the East by the Dzwina and Dnieper; on the West by the Oder and the Carpathians; on the North and South by the Baltic and Black Seas, we find a nation of 16,000,000 inhabitants, differing in language, religion, history, laws, habits, and associations—in all, in short, that forms a truly national character, from all the surrounding populations. Forgotten though it may have been for a time, this country is equal in extent and resources, and its position of equal importance to that of most of the Western Continental States.

It is not necessary to enter into any detail,

respecting the resources or local advantages of Poland; but as it has often, especially by Austrians and Russians, been represented to foreigners, as a poor, backward country, ill-favoured by Nature, and neglected by its possessors, it may be worth while to state, that it is one of the most fertile parts of the Continent, in agricultural produce, possessing mines of various metals, and of salt, which supply great part of the East of Europe, and a rising growth of wool, of the finest quality, with which our manufactures are furnished, through the Saxon Market. Having no considerable manufactures of their own, the Poles are disposed to free trade, which their present rulers have cruelly interdicted, in order to force the industry of the domineering State.

But, many will say, Poland no longer exists; she is known to our maps but as a province of Russia; she never let us hear of her existence during many years; it is all over with her. Was she not dismembered after a war, brought on by her own faults? There is an Aristocracy always quarrelling among themselves, or led by foreign parties, and abusing their power by oppressing their serfs. Neither upper nor lower classes in Poland know what liberty is. Others exclaim; Would you revive a Republic of Jacobins, who wish for nothing but the French Revolution and their old anarchy? Some object, that the Russians and Poles are originally of the same stock, differing but little in habits, language, or character.

More believe, that Poland is happy in her connexion with Prussia, that the interests of her commerce draw her that way, that so she may get rid of the swarms of Jews by which she is overrun, and that she will, by means of Prussia, advance greatly in civilization. Again, it is thought, that being Catholics, they must be happy under the sway of Austria—at least as happy as Hungary, Bohemia, and Lombardy. Perhaps they may.

Every one of these objections, is founded on an erroneous idea of the people whom they concern. Perhaps, one of the writers, who has unintentionally done most disservice to the Poles, is Dumouriez, who is thought to have known them well, and to have given his deliberate judgment in many passages, where he has only given vent to disappointment. The circumstances under which he saw Poland, explain the want of organization of which he so much complains. The eloquent, but too dramatic genius of Ruhlière, has spread over the whole of his narration, so strong a tinge of romance, that it has left on many minds the impression of an heroic tale of the middle ages, rather than of the sober historic truth of the events of yesterday.

In answer to the first class of objectors, it will be shewn hereafter, in explaining one of the most obscure parts of her modern history, not only that Poland did not cease to exist at the time when she was, as far as conquest and dismemberment could effect it, erased from the Map of Europe, but that

with a tenacity of life, which is the character only of free Nations, she had already commenced a silent but glorious career, which has been steadily advancing up to the present day. It is too true, and no Poles of this generation are blind to the fact, that the defects of her old system of government prevented her opposing a successful resistance to the unexampled injustice of her invaders, for whom those defects form no apology. But those very defects were insidiously fomented and perpetuated, by the same Powers who afterwards took advantage of them ; while, as far as the Poles were concerned, they had constitutionally remedied them in the Diet of 1789—91, which was made the immediate pretext of the partition.

For some tastes the Poles are considered too aristocratic, by others too democratic, a nation. Neither of these ideas is correct. Aristocracy is too commonly taken as synonymous with Oligarchy ; and though the former may, in some cases, have a tendency to degenerate into the latter, yet certainly Poland is as far from that condition as possible. There is in Poland no acknowledged aristocracy, except the mass of the Nobles, consisting of many hundred thousand persons, so numerous, that many have taken them for a democracy. Entails and primogeniture are rare in practice, and in principle repugnant to the usages of most of the Slavonic nations. Titles and orders exist, but to a small extent, are not of ancient date in the customs of the country, and

though, *de facto*, enjoyed only by some of the principal families, are not always taken by their legitimate possessors, being thought foreign innovations on the ancient simplicity of the Republic.

The partitioning courts, which abound in titles, decorations, classes, and all the livery of servitude, have in vain endeavoured to attach the respectable part of the Polish gentry by such trappings. The Russian Government, in particular, which is less used to see or comprehend any thing like independence among its hundreds of Princes and Counts, (every individual of whom, in Russia, is obliged to be really or nominally in the service, and to be inscribed in some class, accordingly,) was astonished at finding such numbers of country gentlemen go into voluntary retirement on their estates, rather than bind themselves to the Court. The feuds which formerly raged between different parties, were the *lawful* and natural effects of the elective Monarchy, and of the confederations or authorized resistance to the royal authority, recognized by the Constitution. But these feuds are much exaggerated by authors, and even Ruhlière gives some fine instances of their sacrifice for the public good. The charge of being in the interest of foreign Governments, had its origin also in the unhappy principle of elective Monarchy. Of later years the parties that have been called Russian, Austrian, &c., have been made use of by those powers to further their own

views ; but the individuals who formed those parties, had no object but the good of their country, of which the treatment of those parties by the conquerors, on the first unexpected resistance to their will, is a sufficient proof. The Constitution of May 3, 1791, provided for the emancipation of the peasantry,* and an increased representation of the burgesses ; and even from the earliest times, the Members of the Senate, the Constitutional Aristocratic Body, were named but for life, both that and every other dignity being rigorously prohibited, by the jealousy of Polish freedom, from becoming hereditary. It is difficult to imagine a more unobjectionable system of aristocracy.

The name of a Republic has frightened others, who imagine that a Democracy and Republic are identical. They forget, however, that Poland was at once a Kingdom and a Republic, that a republic of nobles, equal in all but riches, any one of whom might be elected King, was not likely to be very democratic, and, above all, that the former and the present objection neutralize each other. In fact, it was a Constitutional Monarchy, in which the popular principle prevailed, but not among the lowest orders. It was a Republic in which the popular and aristocratic forces were balanced one by the other ; so that the para

* The existence of serfs in the later ages of Poland, was a blot in their civil polity, which, however, they shared with America, Sparta, and other nations remarkable for their love of liberty.

doxical definition of a Democratic Aristocracy would be much nearer the truth than any other that has been given of it. The accusation of Democracy was unheard of at the first partition, but was eagerly put forward in the second, as it afforded the pretext of considering Poland in the same light with the revolutionary government of France.

The Polish spirit of Republicanism never had the smallest connexion with Jacobinism, nor had their principles of revolution any thing in common. The French revolution was effected by the people, overthrowing both Throne and Aristocracy together; while that of Poland was effected by the Aristocracy, who gave up their own privileges to strengthen the Crown, and at the same time to raise the condition of the people. It was a peaceable and benevolent Reform, in which the spirit of all the three Members of the State co-operated with honest intentions and perfect good-will towards each other. But it suited the bad faith of Russia to call this Reform, Jacobinism, and to insist on the ancient state of the Republic being preserved with all its abuses, of which she proclaimed herself guarantee. By these manœuvres she secured the existence of anarchy; and, the self-styled Guardian of the Republic, crushed the best reform that had been seen in Europe, to establish the most cruel despotism.

Many of our English politicians, who have the

happiness of living in a country which enjoys the unspeakable advantage over the entire Continent in being free from all danger and even alarm of foreign incursions and spoliation, think, with profound and pitiable ignorance, that it is no such hard matter for one nation to unite with another, to form one body and one people. They should know that nations, like individuals, have their originalities of character, their peculiarities of habit, ideas, manners, and customs; to say nothing of the more obvious distinctions of laws, constitution, language, and religion. It is by the union of all these principles that national character is formed, that peculiar character which not even similarity of religion, language, or even interests, can soften down under many centuries. Let those, then, who think such obstacles are easily overcome, reflect on the history of the British Monarchy, and think how many ages have elapsed without perfectly uniting the Welch, Irish, Scotch, and English, in spite of many reciprocal advantages? What then, where there is no advantage?

It has frequently been alleged that the union of part or even all Poland with Prussia, would be advantageous to Europe as tending to preserve the balance of power, by strengthening a rising and respectable State in a quarter most exposed to danger. It has been further imagined that Poland was more allied to Prussia by the interests of commerce and civilization, than with either of

the other neighbouring States, that, the two united, might become at once the chief Power of the Baltic, and command the predominant interest in Germany. Setting aside the vast obstacles of difference of language, historical recollections, and religion, we must observe, that Poland was never included, like Bohemia, in the Germanic body, but resisted the many attempts made by the Emperors to assert their right of *Suzeraineté*, by the disposal of the crown. The Poles are not Germans, any more than Russians; still less can they adopt the ill-defined nationality of Prussia or Austria. Prussia has no legitimate controul over the mouths of those great rivers which would pour the trade of Poland into the navigation of the Baltic, were they not sealed by her usurpations. It is true, the commerce of the Vistula is now carried on in Prussian bottoms; but by what title does Prussia hold the Polish cities of Dantzic and Thorn? Polish produce, and sailors, and capital, and ships, supply and conduct, what is, to all intents and purposes, a Polish trade, and which would, had Poland her due, be navigated under the Polish flag, respected as that of any other independent State. Two reasons more especially operate in preventing the cordial union of the two States. The Poles remember that the separate existence of Prussia was originally wrung from them by the Teutonic Knights, who were, for a long period, content to hold it as feudatories, under the Crown of Poland, Prussia being the old name of a Polish Province, and recited as such in the list of titles of the Polish Sovereigns; and the portion

of that Province, held by the Margraves of Brandenburg, successors to the German colonies and power of the Teutonic Knights, as Dukes of Prussia, and from which they took their ill-founded title of King, consisted, previous to the year 1772, of only half the Polish Province of that name, and was always called Ducal Prussia. By the late partitions, the Prussian Government has obtained the remainder of that Province, or Royal Prussia; that is, Royal, as having continued to belong to the Crown of Poland, and, therefore, distinguished from that held by the House of Brandenburg, as vassal Dukes. Later traditions do but widen the breach; for Prussia has the credit of having been the first Power to propose the first dismemberment, and the equally honourable distinction of having turned the scale against Poland in the last, by the treacherous conduct of the late King; and the policy of the present Sovereign has scarcely been more liberal.

The supposed point of union between Poland and Austria, is the community of religion; and the proofs in support of this idea rest chiefly on the case of Bohemia, strengthened, also, as is imagined, by the fact of Bohemia, and other Austrian dependencies, being inhabited by nations not German, but Sclavonic. Though their religion be the same, the spirit of it in the two countries is widely different. History shews the Poles to have been essentially tolerant even in former times, both by character and by law; Austria, and especially Bohemia, (at least, the Catholic population,) quite the reverse. As for community

of origin, the Bohemians are a branch of the Slavonic race, as distinct from the Poles, as these last from the Russians; and the two nations have had little connexion at any period of their history. Silesia, it is true, was once a Province of Poland, and still retains its language, but Silesia is no longer Austrian. In Austria, the Poles see the ingratitude of a nation that owes its present existence to the valour of John Sobieski. She was the first of the three Powers who ventured to make an actual step towards dismemberment, in the seizure of the County of Zips, an insignificant territory, lying south of the Carpathian chain, and forming much the same sort of indefensible appendage to Poland, as Navarre to France, or Nice to Piemonte. It was a territory, the cession of which might easily have been arranged, but Austria preferred an unjust seizure of it, though a lawful possession of Poland, because, by commencing a series of unfounded claims, built on obscure transactions of the middle ages, she saw an opening to claim for Hungary the *soi disant* kingdoms of Galicia, and Lodomeria, whose former existence is not well authenticated, and which have never, as yet, been united to Hungary. It is true, the north of Hungary, and south of Poland, were once united under one tribe, but they were not Hungarians in Poland, but Slavonians in Hungary;* so that the right, if any, was rather in favour of a Polish claim on Hungary, than of Hungary on Poland.

* Their name (Slowiaki) and language, which is Slavonic, bear testimony of this to the present day.

One of the greatest obstacles in the way of commercial improvement in Poland, has been the enormous Jewish population that has grown up there since their first settlement in the country, during the eleventh century. They have prevented the growth of a middle class, of which every nation feels the want, the farther the upper classes advance in civilization. They have blended with neither extremity of the inhabitants; but an alliance with Germany would not counteract the evil, nor benefit Polish commerce by an influx of German traders. As an independent State, Poland must necessarily have had great commercial dealings with the Germans; and though she may have been indebted to the latter people for some few of the arts of life, yet, in the higher departments of science, literature, and civilization, she has, like the other nations of Europe, drawn at once from the fountain head, Italy, and profited from that source more than other nations that were nearer to it.

In the last place, it has been supposed, that, because the Poles and Russians are both of Slavonic race; that because the Kings of Poland were Dukes of Russia; and, further, because a large population of Polish subjects in the Ukraine are called of the Greek religion, that the union of the two countries, or, at least, of Lithuania and the frontier palatinates, would be natural and serviceable to both.

These notions, which Russia has been at some pains to disseminate among foreigners who have no means of verifying truth or detecting error respecting

countries at so great a distance, are built upon some curious circumstances, which it is well to make public.

Though of Slavonic descent, and speaking dialects of the same mother-tongue, the Poles and Russians are as different in character as it is possible to be. Their languages are rather less like each other, than English to German, or Spanish to Italian. They use a different alphabet, and a different calendar, the Russians superstitiously adhering, with the Greek Church, to the old style. Even the higher classes in Poland take pride and pleasure in keeping up their national costume, though strictly prohibited by the Russian edicts to the rising generation. Their dress, their language, their dances, are fondly admitted to, or rather have never left, the best society; while, in Russia, from the Court of the Tzar, to the confines of Asia, there is nothing national, save among the boors; dress, beards—all was banished by the word of command of Peter, or voted to be *mauvais ton* by his successors. The third rate society of the towns, and the remotest provinces of the empire, present nothing but that half Frenchified taste which has been introduced with the language, to the loss of the manners and customs of the country; even the Russian language, for a time, was unfashionable. The classics form no part of education. How different from the character and spirit of the Poles! speaking Latin from their early years, and cultivating modern languages with equal success, firmly attached to their national habits, half a century has failed of

effecting with them, what the mandate of Peter brought about instantaneously in Russia.

The assumption of the Sovereignty of Russia, as a Duchy by one party, and an Empire by the other, requires explanation. The original Russian population were, in the dark ages, seated on the great rivers Dzwina and Dnieper, from which they extended themselves, in petty Principalities, to the West as far as the Bug, and on the East to the Wolga. Their name is still retained in Lithuania, Polesia, and Gallicia, in the districts called White, Black, and Red Russia. These Principalities, by degrees, were blended with Poland, while those East of the Dnieper were overrun by the Tartars. These latter, after two centuries of slavery, emerged from the Tartar yoke, as the Duchies of Great and Little Russia, subject to the Tzar of Moscow; whence the united State received its national and true name of Muscovy, by which only it was known, before Peter thought fit to claim the sceptre of all—that is, the Polish, as well as Muscovite Russias. What Europe took for an empty title, has been turned to account by his successors.

In spite of this dishonest and paltry *équivoque*, in virtue of which the present Emperor holds the best part of Poland, under the national name, as he chuses to consider it, of Russia;* this Polish Rus-

* With equal justice might the Sovereign of the British Isles lay claim to the Province of Brittany, as inhabited by the same aboriginal population, and support his title by the style of “*Britanniarum Rex*.”

sia has little or nothing in common with Muscovy. Long ago united to Poland, having adopted the Polish laws, language, and the Catholic religion in general, these provinces offer a great dissimilarity to Russia. This applies, in some degree, even to the *ci devant* Palatinates on the Muscovite side of the Dnieper, which formed part of Poland till 1772. The Russian Duchies of Tver, Moscow, and other districts, which lay long under the Tartar yoke, while Poland was daily advancing to the first rank among European monarchies in power and civilization, adopted oriental habits, and only changed the despotism of their masters for one of their own. Their dialect, disfigured with Tartar words, and a debased Greek character, is unintelligible to the purer Slavonic of the Poles. Their retention of the Greek ritual, with all its superstitions, is equally abhorrent to their Catholic neighbours. In the Ukraine, and Podolia, there remain, it is true, great numbers of Greek Christians, but not of the Schismatic or Oriental Greek Church. They are called United Greeks, from having, many centuries back, left the Greek Church for that of Rome, to which they were admitted by the Council of Florence. They are met with not only in Poland, but in Italy, from Venice and the Adriatic to Calabria. But the Russian Government, with characteristic bad faith, endeavours, by its Clergy, to persuade the peasantry of this denomination that the difference is but small between the two Greek Churches, but great between them and the Catholics, Russian toleration allowing of converts

being made to their own Church, but none from it. Of the Greek Church of Constantinople, there are but few, and those chiefly Cossacks; yet the spirit of the Polish Cossacks is remarkable for fidelity, both to their country and to their chief, whilst the Russian Cossacks are only known in Poland for their barbarism and excesses.

But admitting that the union of Poland with one of the above-named States might, by possibility, be of use to both, is it by any possibility the case when fragments only of the nation are united to a stronger power? It is not what they look forward to, but what they remember, that calls forth such indignant feelings. It is not the case of Belgium, which has always been a province, and has but a provincial patriotism, which would willingly be a province again, and only asks to what power it shall belong; but it is the case of a nation that has been great, and is now brought low, of a people remarkably united in manners, feelings, and customs, who are divided half a dozen times in half a century, in as many different proportions, at the will of Governments that have no right, human or divine, to meddle in their concerns. Such is the situation of Poland as a divided country, which it still is, in spite of the title of Kingdom given to a portion of it, and in spite of the greater share of the territory, including the other provinces, being united under the sway of Russia.

Dependent countries must be governed either on an equality with the ruling State, or as colonies, or as provinces. Part of Poland is professedly governed

as a province of Russia, part as a dependent kingdom. Such equality can be but of short duration, where not insured by the character of the two nations or their governments; nor is similarity of language, habits, or religion, the chief thing required. Russia is so manifestly below Poland in all principles of government, ideas of law, constitution, justice, literature, and civilization, that one of two things must ensue. Polish improvement would smooth the barbarity of Russian despotism, or the latter swallow up the former. The trial of strength was inevitable, and has been silently in operation ever since the peace. Things might have gone on better, had Alexander, as he was bound to do, governed Poland *en Polonais*; but he had no idea but of governing it *en Russe*. The consequences might have been foreseen by any less blind than the Holy Alliance.

In order to form an idea of what is called national character, it is necessary to examine the early history of the people of which we are treating. Ancient traditions are to nations what the recollections of childhood are to men; it is on such recollections that their character is founded; and history alone will give the key to that tendency, which makes them for ages constant to one tenor of conduct, excited by the same feelings, and faithful to the same dynasty or constitution.

Without going back to the dark ages of European history, it will suffice to state, that, in 1331, Wladislas the First, having united into one body the various duchies and principalities into which Poland had pre-

viously been divided, called a Diet of the nation at Chenciny, in which he laid the foundation of a Constitutional Code. The object he chiefly aimed at, was the destruction of the remaining Oligarchy among the Nobles, which he effected on the soundest principles, not by increasing his own power, but by admitting their inferiors to equal rights and privileges, and subjecting both to an equal contribution to the revenues of the State.

His son and successor, Casimir the Great, in 1347, convoked a second Legislative Diet at Wislica, in which the labours of the Diet of Chenciny were reviewed and perfected. In order to establish a uniform code, he made the inhabitants of various parts of the kingdom present to the Diet the whole of their ancient laws and local usages, which had force of law. Where he found one law acknowledged by all parts of the country, he retained it;—where they differed, a new law was enacted. By this means he wisely contrived that the people should make new laws, and, where possible, preserve their old ones, which, being founded on the immemorial customs of the country, modified and sanctioned by the authority of a popular assembly, before whom the discrepancies arising from local administration had been publicly sifted and corrected, were agreeable to the nation as Common, while they were defined with the precision that belongs to Statute, Law. But the greatest improvements made by Casimir, were, the encouragements given to commerce, by the liberality shewn to the Jews, then the chief traders in the East of Europe,

and who were grievously oppressed in other countries ; and to the peasantry, who were declared capable of leaving their estate whenever they wished to change their master. This law, which gained him the honourable title of “ The Peasant’s King,” is worthy of remark, as shewing that, as late as 1347, the peasantry were not *adscripti glebæ*. Casimir founded also the University of Cracow, and may be said to have placed his country in the respectable situation which she occupied for a long period after his death.

This event, which closed the hereditary succession of the dynasty of Piast, gave an opening to the ill-judged custom of election, which was, in after ages, to exercise such a direful influence on the fate of Poland. Although the Crown was placed, as Casimir had desired, on the head of his nephew, Lewis, of Hungary, yet the admission of the principle and the bad faith which the new King shewed towards his subjects, both helped to fix in the minds of the people the right of electing their Sovereign, and the wish to exercise it. He made a fruitless endeavour to seize Galicia, and annex it to Hungary, an attempt which furnished a sort of precedent, of which Austria, calling it a right, has been base enough to avail herself in these times, and with too much success. But it was not to be expected that a King of Neapolitan race could be very suitable to the ideas of what was then, without exception, the freest people in Europe. Dying in 1386, he left the Crown of Poland to his daughter, Jadwiga, or Hedwige, (so easily in those times did the right of election give way to the princi-

ple of hereditary succession,) who being devoted to Poland, as her father was to Hungary, without delay drove the Hungarians out of Gallicia, and consolidated the territorial strength of the kingdom, by her marriage with Jagellon, Duke of Lithuania, and the consequent union of the two countries. Jagellon completely vanquished the Teutonic Knights, in 1410, and convoking a Diet in 1423, offered the Polish Laws and Constitution to the Lithuanians, which they refused, not chusing to relinquish their rights over their serfs. This is a remarkable fact, as it shews, in the clearest manner, that the liberty of Poland in those days was real, and not a supposed balance of privileged classes, to the detriment of the peasants. It shews the difference between a feudal and a free nation. The Lithuanians were subject to a system, similar to that of the West of Europe; in changing it, the nobles would lose a power over the people, which was dearer to them than any constitutional right of controul over the Sovereign, of the political uses of which they were profoundly ignorant. In this, and many previous Diets, the Constitutions of Chenciny and Wislica were confirmed. It is no mean praise, that Jagellon himself, a Lithuanian, always respected the liberties of Poland, and endeavoured to extend them to his native country, over which he had absolute power.

The right of voting the taxes had been previously established and confirmed by several Diets; and in 1430, Jagellon granted the law, in which the principle of personal liberty was pushed far beyond that of

our Habeas Corpus, and of which the nature will be best understood from its leading declaration, “*Neminem captivabimus nisi jure victum aut in crimine deprehensum.*”

During this reign, the union of the Russian Greeks of Kiow, led by their Archbishop Isidor, with the Roman Catholic Church, took place, and their nobles were admitted to the privileges of the Constitution. It will be remembered that these Russians were not Muscovites, who were still groaning under the Tartar yoke. Jagellon died in 1434.

He was succeeded by his son Wladislas III., who made a successful campaign against the Turks, but was afterwards killed at the siege of Varna. It was in memory of this Sovereign, that the Emperor Nicholas, on the late surrender of that town, graciously deigned to send some of the captured cannon to Warsaw, for the purpose of erecting a national monument. This was done, with a view of appeasing, by an empty compliment, the rising discontent of the people, who were at that moment beginning to complain loudly of the Diet, so unconstitutionally delayed, of the Coronation so long evaded, and of the hundred broken promises which have since roused them to take justice into their own hands. When a nation was respectfully but firmly demanding the confirmation of its constitutional existence, to be put off with the childish offer of a Monument to Wladislas Var-nensis, was not far from the case of asking for bread, and receiving a stone. It was one more proof of the utter inability of an absolute Prince, or his Ministers, and the remark might be extended to all the subjects

of an absolute Monarchy, to comprehend the wants of a free people, or even the tone of feeling produced by that sense of freedom, and by which the expression of those wants will be accompanied.

Wladislas died in 1444, young and much regretted; he might, had he lived, have gone far to prevent the final settlement of the Turks in Europe. He was succeeded by his brother, Casimir IV. during whose long reign, Poland made rapid advances towards the consolidation of her territorial and domestic power. A part of Silesia returned to the dominion of Poland; as did also Pomerania, Warmia, and other parts of the districts held by the Teutonic Knights, who, after a fruitless struggle, agreed in 1466 to do homage for the remainder to the Crown of Poland. A proof that education was within reach of the lower orders at this early period, is the fact, that three of the principal literary characters of the age, Janicki, a Latin poet; Kromer, one of their best historians; and Dantiscus, were all sons of peasants or tradesmen. Nor were talents unrewarded, in those days in whatever rank they were found. Dantiscus was Ambassador to England, Rome, and other Governments; Janicki was crowned Poet Laureate, by Clement the 7th; and Kromer rose to the dignity of Prince, Bishop of Warmia. In 1454, the Diet enacted, that the King could not declare war without the consent of the Senate, the Senate being the aristocratic branch of the legislature: this at least proves a good understanding to have existed between the two houses.

In 1468, the national representation was reformed,

and the Diets which had hitherto been only convoked at pleasure, were henceforward called every two years. Two Nuncios were elected from each district, as well as representatives from the towns. Dietines, or provincial meetings, were held before the departure of the members for the capital, for the purpose of giving them the instructions of their constituents ; similar Dietines were held on their return, in which they were bound to give an account of their parliamentary conduct. There were also provincial Diets, intermediate between the Dietine and the great Assembly of the Nation. Some Palatinates had the privilege of sending as many Nuncios as their eloquence or talents recommended to their fellow citizens, or the urgency of local interests required ; but as the Diet voted by Palatinates, not by single votes, they derived no other advantage from this custom, than the furtherance of their own particular business ; so that the representation had something federative in its character. The elected were not virtually, but directly interested in the welfare of the persons they represented ; not mere agents in Parliament for the places which named them ; they were truly delegates, chosen out of, and belonging to the towns or districts for which they were returned.

In this reign, titles were restricted to a few only of the higher Clergy, in virtue of certain ancient temporalities, as with us. Some families possessed foreign titles, but which, though tolerated by custom, were not admitted in any popular or national assembly. Nor in those times of pure Republican Monarchy,

were decorations, orders, &c. endured by the spirit of the country.

At this period, Poland possessed ports both on the Black Sea and Baltic, and part of modern Muscovy, as far as Great Novgorod, formerly a Republic in alliance with many parts of Western Europe, especially the Hans Towns. This is mentioned, only to shew the real importance of the country during the reign of the Jagellons ; for the most ardent aspirant after independence in Poland, does not now wish for a frontier line beyond the Dnieper and the Dzwina. The most tenable boundary is the best, and it would have been better for the nation to have set those great rivers as an impassable limit to her territory.

In 1492, John Albert, son of Casimir, succeeded to the throne. He had unfortunately been educated by an Italian, Callimaco Buonaccorsi, whose ideas of a Republic not being more enlarged than those then prevalent in the factious oligarchies of Tuscany, persuaded the King to attack the rights of the nation. The attempt was made, but served only to weaken both the power of the Crown and of the people ; for the Diet exacted the privilege of giving or refusing their consent to peace or war, to which formerly the Senate only had been entitled ; and soon after, feeling their strength, abused it, by encroaching on the liberties of their fellow subjects. It usually happens, that when one member of a nicely poised Legislature acquires an undue influence, not one alone, but both the others suffer ; nor does the predominant one fail to betray the liberties of the community at large. Yet these

abuses proceeded slowly, and Poland yet enjoyed many years of tranquillity and glory. Nor were they without some additional benefit to the State. The Courts of Justice were newly organized, and placed out of the power of the Crown, which, however, in some cases, reserved a jurisdiction of appeal.

During the short reign of his brother Alexander, the Crown abandoned the right of distributing its lands, or borrowing on them, without consent of the Diet, which once assembled illegally without the royal summons.

He was also succeeded by his brother, Sigismund the First, during the first years of whose reign the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg, refused to do homage to Poland for their possessions in Prussia, but was reduced to obedience shortly after. In 1533, peace was concluded with the Turks, by which Poland was confirmed in the right of free navigation of the Black Sea, and the Suzeraineté of Moldavia. In 1538, a law was passed to abolish the rights of primogeniture, as contrary to the ancient custom of the nation, and not calculated for a country of such vast extent, in which the division of property was a principle rather to be sought than avoided. This reign was remarkable, as affording the first example of the *Rokosz*, or assembly, *en masse*, for redress of grievances. Though not originally authorized by law, it became the ill-omened precedent of the famous confederations, or authorized revolts, which form so conspicuous a feature in the later history of Poland.

Sigismund dying in 1548, was succeeded by his son, Sigismund Augustus, whose reign was equally favourable to the prosperity of the country. The tolerant spirit of Catholicism, as professed in Poland, was never more conspicuous than in his reign. At a time when Europe was a prey to religious dissensions, Poland was an asylum for the oppressed of all parties, as is evident, from its having been the refuge of Socinus and his followers. Not less than eighty towns possessed printing presses; Cracow alone counted fifty; and its University, lately rendered illustrious by the name of Copernicus, was among the most frequented of Europe. In 1558, the Tzar Ivan having invaded Livonia, the Livonian Knights voluntarily surrendered the Suzerainetè of that important province to Poland, for the sake of protection against the Muscovites. In order to assimilate the condition of Lithuania* to that of Poland, Sigismund gave up his hereditary rights and feudal claims on that Duchy. He thus prevailed on that people to accept the Polish Constitution and tribunals, which they had often before refused, and succeeded in abolishing the exclusive power of the grandees.

On the death of Sigismund Augustus, in 1572, the male line of the Jagellons became extinct. This

* It must not be imagined that Lithuania is in any degree assimilated to Russia, because it differs in dialect and history from Poland; as well might Scotland be considered like France, because it differs from England.

Kosciuszko, Radziwill, Oginski, Jasinski, Pac, and others of the most zealous patriots, were Lithuanians.

event unhappily gave occasion for the exercise of that long dormant right of election, which had never been totally abolished, and which now, for the first time, bestowed the Crown on a Prince of a distant nation. Henri de Valois was chosen King, but, on his arrival, was obliged publicly to clear himself, to the satisfaction of the nation, so much more tolerant than that he had left, of all participation in the late massacre of St. Bartholomew at Paris. He was next called on to accept a Bill of Rights, which had been prepared during the previous interregnum, and to acknowledge it as the Charter of the liberties of Poland. This Charter, under the name of *Pacta Conventa*, provided, that henceforth no King should name a successor; that he should not marry without consent of the Senate; nor declare war, or make treaties, without that of the Diet. He was to promote peace among the Dissenters, and to leave them in perfect liberty, as to their opinions. He was bound to call a Diet once in two years; and if he failed in performance of his oath, all his subjects were, *ipso facto*, absolved from their allegiance to him. He was not to spend his treasure, but, on the contrary to increase it.

After a reign of only a few months, Henry seized the opportunity offered by his brother's death, and his own succession to the throne of France, to fly from Poland, declaring he had been called there to be a King, but found himself only a Judge. So little were the ideas of liberty in France at that day on a level of those current in Poland. His reign, short as

it was, was productive of no event of importance, but his election, which served as a precedent for future successions, and had an unfortunate influence on the ultimate fate of the kingdom.

The throne being declared vacant, it was offered to Anne, sister of Sigismund Augustus. Happy would it have been, had this measure been adopted on the death of her brother. Poland would have been spared a reign, which, appearing almost as an interregnum between two Sovereigns of the race of Jagellon, only broke the line of succession, in order to revive a principle which had better been forgotten. Anne was married to Stephen Batory, Prince of Transylvania, who well maintained the honour of the Crown of the Jagellons. His first measure was to attempt the civilization of the Cossacks, and to fix them as a local and permanent militia on the frontier of the Ukraine. His armies, under John Zamoyski, one of the greatest men of his time, drove the Muscovites out of Livonia, re-took Polock and Pskow, and forced the Tzar to sue for peace. The Pope was the mediator chosen by Ivan, who expressed a willingness to reconcile the Greek Church with the Holy See. Possevin, a Jesuit, was accordingly sent as ambassador, and succeeded in making peace between the two powers; but this accomplished, Ivan made no further advances towards the Catholic faith. Possevin, however, was retained in Poland by Stephen, who, wishing to avail himself of the learning and useful qualities of the Jesuits, gave them the care of the Academy of Wilna. This was another of the causes which, in

the next age, hastened the ruin of the country. In 1578, Stephen granted to the Dietines the privilege of chusing, every two years, the judges of appeal, whose appointment had hitherto rested with the Crown, which now reserved to itself nothing but the attribute of mercy. After repressing with energy the excesses of some turbulent families, he died, and with him the prosperity of Poland, in 1586, on the eve of a war with Muscovy.

It has been necessary to dwell thus at length on the history of Poland during this period, in order to shew the falsehood of the allegations brought against the nation by those whose aim it has been to make the rest of Europe abandon it to its fate. It was necessary to shew that the love of liberty in Poland is not, as in Italy, and several other countries, an ill-defined longing after some unknown good, but that the Polish nation has actually known what liberty and independence are, and has early enjoyed the high rank and importance in Europe, which its character and resources entitled it to. During the greater part of three centuries, while our monarchs were alternately oppressing their subjects or their neighbours, or giving way to favouritism and misgovernment; while France was in a condition little different; while Muscovy was either enslaved to the Tartars, or, when free, endeavouring to enslave the adjoining States, then, as now, having no policy but the most unprincipled ambition, Poland was enjoying the benefits, and extending the provisions of a constitution founded on the principle of popular liberty and national representation, and

which failed of stability, only because the powers of its branches were not sufficiently defined.

Whatever primitive liberty may have been the lot of other nations in the early stages of their existence, or whatever recollection of it tradition may have preserved to them, they have uniformly in Europe been obliged to struggle both to obtain and to preserve it. The feudal system so completely upset the fabric of civil liberty, as far as the lower orders were concerned, that these had to maintain against their lords as great a struggle as the lords against the Crown. But in Poland there was no feudal system, and by a singularity worthy of eternal remembrance, the entire dynasty of Piasts and Jagellons from Wladislas, in 1300, to Stephen, in 1586, consisted of a line of princes who voluntarily gave up every privilege that was demanded by the nation, and whose object was rather to aid their advances, than repress them. Far from adopting the principle now so generally acted on by the continental monarchs, of considering the people as necessarily their enemies, and making every opposition to their improvement, these truly patriotic monarchs were the first to propose laws for establishing the rights of the subject, and abating their own prerogative for the public good. Nor was this weakness, for they made the name of Poland respected at home and abroad.

As might be expected, literature and the sciences flourished; Copernicus was son of a burghess of Cracow, and, in addition to his scientific acquirements, was an eloquent orator in the Diet. In that of Poz-

nan, in 1526, he presented a paper on the coinage of Poland, which has been lately discovered. Not only in Latin, which is spoken by most classes, even at the present day, are their authors of that age numerous, but in Polish also, which had in early times been neglected.

We have now to trace briefly an unhappy contrast to this pleasing picture. In so doing, we shall see the causes which prevented a system, possessing so much of good, from being perfect, or, which would have been nearly the same thing, permanent.

The root of all the evil was the elective monarchy. This, though so long latent in Poland, had been kept alive by the wrong-headed temper of the Lithuanians, who had frequently chosen the King's brother, for the time being, to shew their independence. It had been acknowledged, in the elections of Louis of Hungary, and Henri de Valois. Though the nobles had not yet availed themselves of it, to elect one of their own body, yet it was something to have a Crown to refuse.

It may truly be said that the character of their Monarchs reconciled them to an hereditary succession *de facto*, while they were flattered by the idea of its being in the immediate power of the nation to interrupt it; nor as long as the powers of the respective classes of the community remained within their proper bounds, does there seem to have been any inclination to do so; but when the great nobility had gained an undue preponderance over the Crown, (the Senate, or constitutional aristocratic branch of

the Legislature, being, as it were, only a Committee of themselves,) the smaller nobility, which included thousands of the lower orders, not peasants, and which might be represented in this country by the whole body of electors, (the peasants being free, but having no votes,) began to encroach on the people, and by a succession of abuses of power, at last rendered them serfs. Thus, at last, there were four bodies in the State;—the Elective King, with very limited power; a powerful nobility, comprehending a merely consultative Senate; the whole mass of nobility, or freemen, represented by the Diet; and the peasants, now become serfs; the clergy never appear as a distinct body.

In 1588, the nation proceeded to the election of a successor to Stephen. Zamoyski, the most influential, by his character and services, of all the great nobles of that day, proposed and obtained the admission of the whole body of the freemen of the nation to vote for the choice of a Monarch. Thus one of the most powerful of the aristocracy, considered it an act of justice to his fellow-citizens, to extend to them, individually, without the intervention of a Diet, the right of choosing their Sovereign. Such an aristocracy could surely never be accused of oligarchy. Zamoyski, although author of this almost democratic measure, was, like most of his countrymen, so much attached to the Jagellon blood, that he accomplished the election of Sigismund Vasa, Prince of Sweden, as descended through the female line from that family. He had previously supported

the election of Stephen and Anne, on the same principle, but, this time, with less benefit to the country. In the preceding age, surrounding nations repeatedly offered their Crowns to the Sovereigns of Poland, induced by the superior freedom enjoyed under their government, to what their own Princes would grant to their subjects. Such, also, would be the effect of the re-establishment of Poland with a free constitution, even in these days; and that effect would soon be seen in the eagerness of the neighbouring Provinces, however long dismembered, to unite with her. But the same disparity of liberal notions, acts now, as it did then, in creating a jealousy, not to say a spite, of the neighbouring despots, towards a nation so much their superior. In the fifteenth century, she could keep them at a distance; but the time was now come, when, instead of being selected by other nations as the guardian of their liberties, she was reduced, instead of accepting proffered crowns, to accept foreign Princes to wear her own; yet the tendency to hereditary succession is very remarkable down to this period. Her collective strength was impaired, but her citizens were still loyal and brave.

In spite of the signal victories gained by Zamoyski over the Austrians, by Chodkiewicz over the Turks and Swedes, and by Zolkiewski over the Muscovites, whose Tzar was brought in triumph to Warsaw, this reign was far from being a happy one. Sigismund gave himself up to the Jesuits, who destroyed the liberal system of education previously established, and reduced the liberty of the press. His bigotry

caused him to lose the Crown of Sweden, for which he plunged into a ruinous and fruitless war. The Jesuits, also, sowed dissension between the formerly united Greek and Latin Churches of the Ukraine, and brought on a war with Muscovy. Moldavia was taken by the Turks. The Senate, which, on the accession of Sigismund, reckoned a majority of Protestant members, at the close of his reign possessed but two. The most remarkable events in the internal history of the kingdom, was the confederation of Sandomir; the first rebellion called legal, in which 100,000 freemen rose, under the command of a Prince Radziwill, to oppose the marriage of the King, contrary to the will of the Senate. This unhappy precedent, too often to be repeated, took place in 1605. The principle of these lawful revolts was not unknown to the ancient Constitutions of Spain, but was no where carried to such lengths, as in Poland. The nation, as Sovereign, denounced the King as a rebel to its authority, and refused to obey him till he yielded to them. Both parties usually took arms, and the consequences to the repose of the nation may be conceived. Sigismund, on the faith of assistance from Spain, and the Emperor, fitted out a fleet in the Baltic, against Sweden, but was defeated before the Spanish ships could arrive. Zamoyski, against the custom of the country, created a *majorat*, a university, and a fortress, on his estate. It had been well if the other grandees had made as good use of their vast property. At his own expense, he led an army into Walachia, for the service of the State. This

mixture of aristocracy, patriotism, and love of liberty, is a perfect picture of the nation at this period. His advice to Sigismund, *Regna, sed non impera*, is worthy of the best times of Poland, and would form an appropriate motto to the national arms of any free country.

Wladislas IV. succeeded his father, in 1632. His reign was only remarkable for the farther encroachments of the noblesse, who, after some successes over the Muscovites, and revolted Cossacks, obliged him to disband his army, and fixed the number of the Royal Guards at 1200 men, and refused to ratify the alliances he had concluded. He wished to institute an order of knighthood, but the Diet forbid the smallest distinction ; yet there existed, even among the Poles of that day, some few who endeavoured, but in vain, to restore the balance of the different members of the body politic ; and the consideration which Poland still enjoyed abroad, was such, that foreigners of high rank solicited admission to the rank of Polish nobility, the value of which, partly, it may be said, arose from its abuses ; for the Diet having arrogated to itself the right of granting letters of nobility and naturalization, it was no easy thing to obtain them. Titles of nobility were more strictly prohibited than ever ; so that, strange as it may seem, the aristocracy, if the nobles might so be called, became more democratic, as it became more powerful. The intolerance of the Jesuits brought on another revolt of the Cossacks ; and in 1648, John Casimir, brother of Wladislas, mounted the throne. His reign

is a tissue of anarchy and misfortune ; overrun by Swedes, Cossacks, Tartars, and Muscovites, a prey to religious animosities, Poland was entirely degraded from her former condition. Even the successes of Czarniecki, and Lubomirski, who drove the Swedes beyond the Baltic, failed of affording permanent relief. In 1652, the *liberum veto* was pronounced for the first time in the Diet, which, by annulling all its acts, reduced the Legislature and Government to a mere shadow. This principle of unanimity was introduced to favour the smaller nobles, who felt their individual importance increased, by the power of dissolving the Diet, and throwing their country into confusion by their single voice. This incredible abuse was, in some measure, practically remedied by another,—the confederations, or legal revolts, of which we have before spoken, and in which a majority decided. A famous example occurred in 1655, when some of the great nobles met at Tyszowa, and swore to rid their country of the Swedes. The King, who had previously escaped to Silesia, came through Hungary to Leopold, and signed the act of confederation. By a strange inconsistency, the King could adhere to these confederations, and frequently there were several at the same time in different provinces. Casimir treated his faithful subjects with such ingratitude, that the few Cossacks that remained with him fled to Turkey ; and Lubomirski, conqueror of the Swedes, was forced to leave the country. But this bigotted Prince, alarmed at the menaces of the Swedes, who threatened to divide the country with the

Margrave of Brandenburg, abdicated, and retired to a Convent in France, in 1669.

During the three last reigns, the fact of hereditary succession had been submitted to, though the principle was as much opposed by the nation as ever. In the choice of Michael Wisnowiecki, the election of a subject was for the first time sanctioned by the Diet; and even he was preferred on account of his tracing his descent from the Jagellons.

This reign was memorable only for a Turkish war, in which John Sobieski gained the reputation which placed him on the throne. His internal Government was, however, not equally fortunate with his external policy. After saving Austria from the Turks, for which he was entitled to the gratitude of the whole of Europe, he was treated by her with ingratitude which needs no comment.

Augustus of Saxony was elected in 1696, and, during a stormy reign, did nothing to ensure the gratitude of the nation. Stanislas Leszczynski was elected by another party, and the wars which Charles the XIIth. and Peter the Great carried on in Poland, completed the picture of anarchy and distress. At the death of Augustus, Louis XVth. of France, who had married the daughter of Stanislas, supported, insincerely, his pretensions; and these not succeeding, the nation elected Augustus, son of the late King. With their characteristic love of paradox, the Poles seem usually to have preferred an hereditary succession, provided that their vanity was gratified by the power of electing the individual.

The reign of Augustus III. was a period of weakness, the natural effect of the previous confusion. But as many of the sons of those who had followed Stanislas in his retreat, came back to Poland, with all the advantages of a French education, a wish to reform began to shew itself: however, as might be expected, in a country where personal independence was absolutely without controul, the best intentioned citizens were not agreed as to the manner. Konarski, a monk, by founding at his own expense a College at Warsaw, and supporting in his writings the liberal ideas of the age, against the prejudices of the Jesuits, conferred a lasting obligation on his country. The Bishop Zaluski founded a public library of vast size, containing many valuable manuscripts. It was seized and carried to Petersburg by the Russians. The soldiers who were charged with the packing, cut some of the larger books, in order to cram them into the cases. No country, after England, can boast of more public establishments of all sorts, founded by private individuals, even in the country towns. Thus we see, that, as in the last generation, the brilliant qualities of individuals alone, held the State together, by opposing to a turbulent anarchy the force of patriotism, combined with military talent; so in this, the equally patriotic endeavours of a few enlightened persons contributed to open the eyes of the nation, and to prepare the national mind for its renovation, even at the apparent moment of its extinction.

The Diets were such a constant scene of confusion, that it became necessary, in order to transact public

business, to turn the Diet itself into a confederation, in order to dispense with the Veto. One short Diet was called the Dumb Diet, because it passed off without any dispute. The ancient habit of assembling armed, did not render the Diets more tranquil.

It has been shewn, in the first part of this sketch, that, during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, Poland possessed, in an eminent degree, the qualities that make a nation great and happy ; that, during the 17th, and part of the 18th, she descended rapidly in the scale, from faults which proceeded partly from the excess of some good qualities, and the ill-adjusted mixture of the whole. But the national character was never debased or degraded : the nation never submitted to a tyrant ; and part of its misfortunes arose principally from the love of a country which it knew not how to govern, and a love of liberty which it knew not how to limit.

It was in this state of things, that the death of Augustus III. left the field open to a new election. After numberless shifts and intrigues, the choice fell upon Stanislas Poniatowski, a man whose qualities and accomplishments might have graced the throne in times of tranquillity, but whose character was not of a stamp to meet the difficulties which beset him. Elected by foreign influence, and that the hated influence of Muscovy, or as that power now styled herself, Russia,* he found on his accession a large party of

* In order to found a claim to the districts in Poland, called White, Red Russia, &c. Hence the assumption of the title of *all the Russias*.

the nation prejudiced against him. Misled by the faction which had raised him to the throne, a faction which was itself blinded by the insidious policy of Russia ; he so far forgot the dignity of the nation which he represented, as to allow Russian troops to govern in his provinces, and a Russian Ambassador to dictate to him in his palace. The opposite, or patriotic party, headed by the Radziwills, indignant at the humiliation of their country, tried in vain every means in their power, to thwart the undisguised interference of Russia ; who, by her agents, failed not to embitter as much as possible their intestine dissensions.

The Empress Catherine, perceiving the advantage that might be derived from the distracted state of Poland, resolved, *per fas et nefas*, to convert that country, or as much as she could get of it, into a Russian province. Seeing that there was a party willing to introduce some reforms, and regularity of government into the State, and not averse, for that purpose, to avail themselves of her influence, she lent them her aid to place Stanislas on the throne, and took Poland under her gracious protection. This party was led by the Czartoryski family ; and though held up to the hatred of the nation for a time, was not less patriotic in its ultimate views than that of the Radziwills. Pursuing the same end by opposite means, they both so exasperated the Empress, that she ordered her troops to overrun the provinces, and to lay waste the lands of all who did not enjoy the protection of the Russian Minister. In this sweeping devastation, the Czartoryskis and others of what was

called the Russian party, were included; her rage was extreme against those whose patriotism had deceived her, being as far beyond the comprehension of a Russian, as their liberty was hateful in her sight.

It was the policy of Russia to make use of either of the two parties which divided Poland, according as their views for the moment coincided with her's. As long as the one sought to gain a moments repose for their distracted country, during which to organize a stable system of government, without impairing the free institutions and liberal principles of the nation, and sought, with the most patriotic intentions, to ground that moment of breathing time on the influence, however unfortunately existing, of a foreign power in the State, so long did Catherine uphold the Czartoryskis, and put forward her good offices (always supported by troops) for the welfare of Poland. But when the Czartoryski party, whose motives were not understood by the mass of the nation, had become suspected of a real attachment to the interests of Russia, and had made themselves almost odious to the people, in consequence of it; they shewed that their aim was not the interest of Russia, but that of Poland, and the vengeance of the disappointed despot was terrible. Although nominally at peace with Poland, her Ambassador seized the venerable Soltyk, Bishop of Cracow, the Palatine Rzewuski, and others of the patriots, and sent them to Siberia; yet Russia puts forward her

benevolent intentions, and complains she is not believed, and calls God to witness her sincerity! God is the witness!

Catherine, perhaps the worst woman that ever lived, was not to be duped with impunity; the houses, lands, property, of all who were lately called her partizans, were utterly laid waste by her ferocious Cossacks, and the hitherto mis-named Russian party were cleared in the eyes of their countrymen for ever. She then addressed herself to the country party, who had opposed all innovation, and perceiving that many of the old customs of the Republic, to which they were so devotedly attached, were, in fact, abuses of liberty, which must soon bring Poland into a condition of irretrievable anarchy, she professed her readiness to assist them in maintaining the *liberum veto*, the elective monarchy, (on which she had already fixed a longing eye,) and the complete independence of ministers, to be appointed for life. To her Russian slaves she needed little justification, but even their passions were aroused by the declaration, that her efforts were directed to the toleration of their Greek brethren in the southern palatinates. Toleration, as we have seen, was an ancient and fundamental law of the glorious period of Polish independence, but which had, by the unhappy influence of the Jesuits, become gradually encroached upon. Toleration is also a principle proclaimed by Russia, but in a very different spirit. In Russia, Missionaries of all

creeds are allowed to convert persons of any religion, *except the Greek*, and a Greek is not supposed capable of being converted to any other faith, nor is his conversion recognized. In short, it is an engine of State policy, and all the various religions of that immense empire are subject to a lay Minister for ecclesiastical affairs, who may be of any sect the Emperor chuses. In Poland, toleration was a consequence of the inborn liberty of the subject, a toleration recognized by Government and the Church; in short, a victory gained tacitly and reasonably, by the principles of rational liberty of conscience, over the exclusive tendencies of Popery, and which is doubly valuable, both as shewing the old radical spirit of liberty among the Poles, as well as the Christian charity, which forms the soul of the Catholic Church, where not overgrown by mundane excrescences. As for the toleration of the Greek Church, it is well seen in the Levant, where it is unbiassed by the worldly policy which modifies it in Russia, and where the enmity of the Greeks against the Catholics is infinitely more violent than against the Mahometans. Even in Russia, the good will testified towards Protestants, is exclusively on the supposition, that, wishing to restore the purity of the primitive Church, they have deserted the Catholic, to approximate to the Greek.

The first act of this painful drama was now drawing to a close. It was delayed some time by the glorious resistance of a confederation, formed

at the little town of Bar, in Podolia, by three patriots of the families of Potocki, Krasinski, and Pulawski. Their forces resisted the Russians, in a desultory warfare for four years, and contributed mainly to raise the character of the Poles among foreign nations. Several French officers, among them Dumouriez, served under its banners. An unsuccessful attempt was made to carry off the weak King, and to put him at the head of the confederation, which, although already legal, would then have become the constitutional body of the nation. About this time the King of Prussia sent his brother, Prince Henry, to Petersburg, and to him is attributed the dishonourable celebrity of having hinted the first at the possibility of a dismemberment. In 1772, this hint was acted on. Austria seized the county of Zips, and Russia, as much as it then suited her, of Lithuania; and in 1773, by her Ambassador, called on the Diet to ratify these spoliations. Russia had already filled Warsaw with troops, and surrounded the Senate with her forces; but even then she met with opposition. I must refer to original authorities for the particulars* of the acts of courage, moral as well as personal, that distinguished this period, for the noble resistance of Reyten, who lay a day and a night before the door of the Diet, rather than yield to the violence of the Russians, or the devotion of Korsak, who told the Russian Amba-

* See Ruhlière. *Anarchie de Pologne*, vol. 1.

Tableau dela Pologne—par Chodzko.

sador that he resigned into his hands the whole of his property, and that he might then bribe him or intimidate him if he could. The confederates of Bar left the country, Benyowski wandered over the whole world, as is well known, and Pulawski died, fighting for liberty, in America, with Washington, and, unfortunately, against England.

During what was called the peace, which lasted from 1772 to 1793, a series of vexations was kept up by the Russian Ambassadors in Warsaw, which would appear almost incredible. These Proconsuls, or rather bullies, behaved with the greatest insolence to the King, to the Diet, and to the nation. Their troops never left the country; no measure of State was adopted without the Empress's consent, who opposed all attempt at improvement, in order that the evident decline of the State might place it the sooner in her hands. It is difficult to imagine a line of conduct more diabolical. She named a permanent Council, which assisted her Minister in the disposal of the troops and resources of the country, contriving both to render the King detested, and to turn the very detestation in which he was held to her advantage. The Ambassador, Stackelberg, went so far as to receive audiences for the King. France was then at the weakest period of her history, England unhappily engaged in disputes with her colonies, so that the natural brutality of Russia met with no opposition; and from her conduct, then, it is easy to calculate the system she would

pursue with any country which had the incalculable misfortune of falling under her sway. Incapable of remedying her aggressions by the introduction of good government, for no power can bestow that which it does not possess, her ambition, unlike that of France, carries with it no redeeming character.

During these years of severe trial, a new generation had grown up, led by the same veterans of liberty who had distinguished themselves in the early days of the first partition; they had, by a study of foreign constitutions, and a more enlightened education, imbibed ideas of rational liberty better suited to their country, than those of their predecessors. Of such was composed the famous patriotic Diet of 1788. They began by a determination to settle the Constitution of their country on a permanent basis, to embody the ancient traditional ideas of liberty which were afloat among the people, and to place Poland in a state in which she might defy the cupidity of her neighbours. For this purpose, in order to preclude the objection that was foreseen on the part of the self-styled Guardian of Poland, the Diet, in order that it might be the work of the whole people, called a *double* representation for the express purpose; all the Dietines giving precise instructions to their representatives how to vote. It is impossible to conceive a national body better authorised to reform a national constitution. Their first act, as might be imagined, was to abolish the Permanent

Council; the next, to declare the old law of Liberty of Conscience, the fixed law of the land. The Throne was then pronounced hereditary in the family of the Elector of Saxony, because it had given the shadow of an hereditary succession. Thus a foundation was laid for the future nomination of the King of Saxony, as Duke of Warsaw. The enfranchisement of the peasantry, and the fusion of the classes of nobles and burgesses, were also provided for by gradual measures. Prussia, even, volunteered her approbation of the Constitution, which was proclaimed the 3rd of May, 1791.

The Empress of Russia, however, was far from bestowing a similar approbation on the proceedings of the Diet; sensible, that if the Polish Government was once placed on a stable foundation, she would be for ever excluded from playing the game of intrigue in that country, which had hitherto turned so much to her advantage; and that if the hereditary succession of the House of Saxony were confirmed, the hasty approbation of the King of Prussia might be strengthened by the wish to transplant, permanently, that family from Dresden to Warsaw, as a measure by which his interests must ultimately be benefitted. Embarrassed, also, by her disputes with Turkey, she, for a while, dissembled her displeasure; but employed herself in silently collecting her troops on the frontier, and endeavouring to overawe the newly re-established constitutional Monarchy. At

the same time, she seized the pretext of the discontents of a very few ambitious or ill-judging nobles, who, blindly attached to the anarchical liberty of their country, raised a confederation at Targowica, against the rational innovations which had been adopted.

These persons, whose names have been held up to more than their merited reproach, were, in fact, men, some of whom had previously distinguished themselves in the patriotic cause; all were persons of great wealth and family, and above the reach of pecuniary corruption; but either their ambition made them cling to the principle of elective monarchy, so loudly advocated by Russia, or believing that the weakness of their country rendered her incapable of restoration, except by the aid of a Power, in whose promises they blindly confided, they threw themselves into her hands. Less than this, would have furnished a pretence to Russian cupidity; and, accordingly, the Empress immediately gave them her support. The King of Prussia, seeing how affairs were likely to turn out, withdrew his professions of friendship; and, in answer to a request of the Polish Government for his promised aid and assistance, coldly replied, that his alliance was only to be looked for when the demands of Russia were satisfied; and ended, by requiring the cession of Dantzic, and Thorn.

The Russian Ambassador, with the aid of the troops of his mistress, forced a mock Diet to assemble at Grodno; and there, in spite of the

most heroic resistance, informed the nation, that the Empress having taken the affairs of Poland into her own hands for the preservation of her liberties, had resolved on annexing to Russia the whole of the Provinces of Lithuania, Volhynia, the Ukraine, and Podolia; Prussia taking a similar portion of territory in Pomerelia. This most infamous second partition was effected at a moment when France and England were becoming every day more embroiled in the commencement of the Revolution; and when, by the consequent non-interference of the only two Powers that could have prevented it, Russia, and her Allies, could direct every thing their own way. Such is the game that she is looking forward to now. When by means of Holland and Belgium, or, perhaps, Spain and Portugal, she may have employed England and France with each other, she hopes to possess herself of the whole of Poland, not as a Kingdom, but a Russian Province, and will allow Austria and Prussia to seek their indemnity elsewhere.

But Polish spirit was not yet exhausted. A revolt was speedily organised among the peasantry, who, under the immortal Kosciuszko, defeated a Russian army near Cracow, and once more roused the nation against their oppressors. Jasinski was equally successful in Lithuania; and though these efforts were not ultimately fortunate, they deserve to be for ever celebrated as the dying struggles of the country. It was in this school

that were formed those distinguished men who fought with Napoleon, and who are, at the present hour, leading their sons to the field of honour.* The King, during this latter period of his unhappy reign, displayed every shade of weakness belonging to his character. On the 3rd of May, sincerely promoting the Constitution, soon after, heading the odious Confederation of Targowica; now opposing, now stooping to Russia, his motto might have been,

———Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora sequor.———

when all hopes were destroyed by the defeat of Macieiwice, in 1795, the third total dismemberment was accomplished. It was then, and then only, for the short space of ten years, that the political existence of Poland seemed to be annihilated. Of all the projects of partition, that was the best imagined in its way, and likely to be the most durable, which assigned an equal portion of territory to each of the invading powers. However the additional territory might be acquired, the proportional balance would remain the same between them as before. But honour is not always found even among thieves: the rapacity of Russia always turned the scale, and by securing

* The best account of all these iniquitous transactions is to be found in the *Hist. des trois dèmembrements de la Pologne*, par Ferrand, compiled from authentic documents.

the largest share of booty for herself, preserved unwarily within her new frontier, a corps de nation, which a triple and strictly equal division would have annihilated, and which happily has served as a nucleus, round which the remnants of the nation have rallied. It is easy to perceive, that, even as a military position, the Russian share of Poland is incomplete without the rest. Austria and Prussia could not but have observed, that Russia, with all her apparent strength, was never able to subdue Poland single-handed, but, however unwilling, was always obliged to have recourse to them. Hence arose jealousies, and a feeling of injustice among the spoilers, which has haunted and poisoned the enjoyment of their ill-gotten wealth from that hour to the present. So that it may be said a perfect partition, and, consequently, a perfect annihilation, has never been accomplished; a fact which has given consolation to the Poles in their subsequent efforts, and shewn them, that as long as they could, from time to time, by any means, disturb the existing arrangements between the Powers, and prevent the divided state of their country from becoming a permanent condition of their existence, so long there was hope, that, by constant change, there might be a change for the better. Such agitation would always keep alive a feeling of nationality, the thread to which their hopes of regeneration were attached.

The vital principle of the existence of Poland, as a Republic, was, that the nation never dies;

and the time was now come, when, blotted from the map of Europe, her laws, language, dress, and liberties, proscribed by the Despotic Governments to which she had fallen a prey, this noble principle was to be called forth in all its glory. Poland existed, not even as the name of a province, but the nation was indestructible. A nation which has, in its deepest misfortunes, always cherished, most religiously, the positive belief, one might say, the superstition of its future re-establishment, must be indestructible.

The first step towards regeneration, was imagined at the very moment of the apparent dissolution of the nation. After the unhappy event of the battle of Macieiwice, when Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz were led prisoners to Russia, Dombrowski, a name second to none of the heroes of his country, conceived the idea of uniting all the scattered exiles under the national banner, and offering their services, not as mere auxiliaries, not as mercenaries, but as a “*Nation sans Patrie*,” to France, the only power whose protection seemed to offer the recompense they looked to. This recompense was the re-establishment of Poland; and it is a fact, that, after the most brilliant services, whenever the thanks of the French nation were voted to the gallant Polish Legion, Dombrowski invariably replied by an answer reminding France of her engagements towards Poland. A civil Committee, the shadow of the Polish Government, was also sitting, sometimes at Paris,

sometimes in Italy, scrupulously observing the minutest rules of the Diet, in order that the constitutional character of their acts might not afterwards be called in question. This respectable punctilio is perfectly in the character of the nation.

Napoleon fully appreciated the merits of the Legion as soldiers, but his mind was not great enough to feel the value of their patriotism. But, after spending their blood in Italy, Spain, St. Domingo, and in various campaigns, where neither the cause of Poland, nor the principles of liberty, were advanced by him, they ultimately succeeded, after a campaign against Prussia, partly carried on in their own country, in extorting from him the formation of his Polish conquests into the Duchy of Warsaw. Then it was that the survivors of those that had shed their blood in seemingly hopeless warfare, met the recompense they deserved. Since that time they cease not to repeat to their countrymen, that not one of their fellow soldiers who died in Egypt, or the West Indies, died in vain. In Poland, the lowest esteems himself useful, the highest believes not himself essential, to his country. Thus a wandering nation of 15,000 warriors restored Poland, if not to her rank, at least to her independence. The Crown was given, as of right it devolved, to the Elector, now King of Saxony.

But even this restoration of the legitimate Monarch was accompanied by such proofs of the lit-

the cordiality felt by Napoleon for the State he had just helped to re-establish, that it opened the eyes of the nation to their real situation, and shewed them the little they were in future to expect from him. He divided the country into departments, in accordance with the revolutionary geography of France and her dependent provinces, a measure which violently incensed the old Poles, who expected a return to the old division into Palatinates,* &c. He ordered the acts of administration to be registered in his name, at least for a time; he refused to annex Dantzic, a port of vital importance, to Poland, but, with his usual paltry policy, made it into a separate Republic, for fear of offending Prussia, whom he had so lately humbled; he refused the title of Kingdom to the new State, in order not to offend Russia; and when by a masterly campaign, under Dombrowski and Poniatowski, the Polish army, without his assistance, had re-conquered half of Gallicia, including Leopold, the capital, he privately agreed to abandon the best part of this honourable conquest to

* This attachment to old forms is a strong characteristic of ancient national respectability, as distinguished from the upstart nationality of the day. The tri-colour would have as little effect in Poland as in England. Nor is the attachment useless. Had the Tudors and the Stuarts abolished the forms when they corrupted the practice of Law and Constitution, we might yet have been without a Jury or a Parliament. Forms are the beacons which direct mankind to the recovery of lost principles.

Austria, to obtain some provinces on the Adriatic. Yet still the acquisition to the Duchy was considerable, and being gained by a series of victories over the Austrians, as the former provinces had been over the Prussians, excited greater rejoicing in the nation. It was during the temporary occupation of Warsaw, in this campaign, that the women of that capital clad themselves spontaneously in deep mourning, to receive the Archduke Ferdinand, and did not quit it till his evacuation of the city. The Constitution, as Napoleon left it, was liberal according to his ideas, but yet it was not the Constitution of Poland, the Constitution of the 3rd of May, for which they had paid so dearly. The Polish character is remarkable for candour, perhaps above that of any other nation; they do justice even to their enemies; and, on the other hand, do not suffer themselves to be deceived, even by their friends. Credulous at first, they ever after judged Napoleon correctly; and although attached to his cause from military associations, they soon learned to place but slight reliance on his professions, and saw his downfall with as little regret as it deserved.

But Polish ideas of liberty were not to be satisfied by mere nominal independence. Napoleon so completely mistook the national character, that he thought he had given them the greatest boon in making them a detached province of France, on the footing of Italy and the Netherlands. Independence was gained, but not liberty; and what

was gained, was yet to be extended to the whole nation, still groaning under the iron sceptres of conquering powers. The campaign of 1812 opened a field for their exertions, but Napoleon was piqued, perhaps at the little satisfaction which his fine phrases had given to a people, who knew too well what real liberty was, to be easily put off with the phantom with which he intended to amuse them, and treated them with a degree of luke-warmness which is unaccountable; yet they did not relax in their efforts. They resolved, however, this time to fight for themselves, rather than for him, and some were so disgusted, that they kept altogether aloof. The Emperor Alexander was not slow to take advantage of this favourable circumstance; and as he then thought proper to advocate liberal opinions, succeeded in persuading many of the most considerable Lithuanian families to join his party, if not his standard.

In the early part of his reign, Alexander had professed great horror at the means by which Catherine had gained her Polish provinces, and had in some respects pursued a liberal policy towards them—especially in public education. His conduct was guided by the influence of Prince Adam Czartoryski, and Count Czacki, whose exertions, to keep alive all that the Poles understand and value so justly, under the name of Nationality, i. e. laws, language, customs, dress, &c. were unremitting. By their advice, he founded the Universities of Wilna in Lithuania, and

Krzemieniec, in Volhynia, which have both been of signal service to the country. Being, therefore, supposed by the Poles to be desirous of repairing, by good administration on liberal principles, the evils which Russia had inflicted on their country, many hailed, at that period, his protection, as preferable to the ill-disguised despotism and ambition of Napoleon.

The character of Alexander was precisely such as to win the Poles on this occasion. His policy was at that time to encourage the people to rise against the French, by the hopes of obtaining from him liberal institutions accompanied by peace, which France, if she granted them at all, seemed determined should be attended by war. After having successfully repelled the French from his Russian dominions, he paused on the frontier, in order to appear to yield unwillingly to the earnest solicitations of his Allies, and chiefly to the extravagant compliments and other arguments of England, before he would give any further assistance towards the liberation of Europe. At last he consented to pursue Napoleon towards France, well aware that, in the necessary progress of his army to the West, he must march over Poland, and so occupy as it were by necessity the very territory he was bent on annexing to his Empire. Thus, while paid for fighting the battles of Europe, he was craftily securing the chief object of his private ambition. About this period an application was made to him by some of the principal

personages in Poland, including part of the then existing Ministry of the Duchy of Warsaw, to save their country from a repetition of the barbarities of Souvaroff, and, by an appeal to his humanity, to endeavour to obtain for them, at a peace, an independence which they had so long sought in vain. It will be recollected that the Duchy of Warsaw had been formed at the expense of Austria and Prussia; so that Russia had much to gain and little to lose by agreeing to take that short-lived monarchy under her protection. Abandoned by France in her reverses, and disappointed by her in her prosperity, many who had the real interest of their country at heart thought they could rely on the professions of Alexander, and even made advances to him by a proposal of uniting either the whole, or as much as could be obtained of the detached provinces of Poland, and annexing them to the portions yet retained by Russia; the whole to be disjoined for ever from the Empire, but as a sort of compensation, made hereditary in the Grand Duke Michael and his heirs; so early had the notion gained ground that Constantine (whom they never thought of as a Ruler) was to give way to Nicholas in the Imperial succession. To this proposition Alexander returned a most artful answer, expressing a sincere regard for Poland, and a wish to contribute to its welfare; accepting the sentiments of esteem and confidence reposed in him; declaring openly his intention of allowing them a Constitution, to be placed on the

most liberal basis, because that coincided most *exactly with his own political ideas*; but declaring also that whoever sat upon the throne of Warsaw, the Sovereign of Lithuania and the other early conquests, must also be the Sovereign of Russia: he concluded by waiving the offer made to the Grand Duke Michael, informed them that he was on the point of entering the country with his protecting army, and made a pompous detail of its overwhelming force—a hint which could not be misunderstood, though conveyed in the civilest terms imaginable.

To this there was no answer but resignation: and in this state things remained until the meeting of the Congress at Vienna. The account of those negociations in Lord Londonderry's last work, will give a truer idea of their character, and of the personages concerned, than any thing hitherto published. In the midst of their deliberations, Napoleon escaped from Elba; and Alexander, *encore se trouvant dans le cas de se faire prier*, made his bargain precisely to his own fancy, and to the utter disappointment of the hopes of Poland. I will not waste words in useless regrets, for I give English readers credit for feeling, as the disgrace of their diplomacy, the sacrifice then made of the nation in Europe, the most congenial to them in ardent love of constitutional liberty, and national independence.

Alexander cut off from the Duchy of Warsaw the province of Poznania, to accommodate Prussia

with a few thousand unwilling souls; said, graciously, he would re-unite Lithuania with Poland, *when* he pleased; and treating the diminished nation like children, imagined he should blind them by taking the title of King, while he insulted them by the additional one of Tzar.

He granted Poland a Constitution, scarcely better than that of Napoleon, but turned the Departments into Palatinates, and restored some other national forms. His vanity, and love of popularity, whether in the camp, the council, or the saloon, led him to adopt that affability of manner, and sometimes to yield points of minor interest, which led a sanguine people daily to hope that the morrow would see their condition bettered. Fond of Warsaw, as a residence, because, freed from the restraint which the constant servility of the Russians obliged him to impose upon himself, (strange subjection for an Autocrat,) he seemed to enjoy the respectful, but independent conversation, and original character of the Polish society, which, whether he knew the cause or not, he never met with in Petersburg or Moscow; capitals in which independence and originality do not flourish. He would condescend to speak vaguely of his plans, and listen patiently to opinions, which in Russia would never have reached his ear.

In the mean time, the Russians, at first gratified by the extension of Empire, became jealous of the attentions paid to Poland. The few among them,

who wished for, or knew what constitutional liberty was, were mortified that Poland should obtain it, and from their common Sovereign, before themselves. Many that neither understood, nor cared for it, were mortified at seeing Poland preferred to them; for they suspected, at least, that it was an acknowledgment of superior civilization. Lithuania, which we have seen fostered by the care of Czartoryski, was in daily expectation of a re-union with Poland, a re-union, which was partly deferred on account of that jealousy, partly for fear of inciting the Duchy of Posen and Gallicia to rally round the Polish throne; a consequence, which, however pleasing it might have been to Alexander, was not, at that moment, agreeable to his friendly relations with their respective masters. Gallicia has always been ruled by Austria, with an illiberal sway: she was also promised a Constitution and a Diet, which have been granted in a manner to be perfectly nugatory. The Polish dress, and language, are either proscribed, or not allowed in public; and the administration of the province is given up to adventurers, and outcasts of other provinces. Their troops are exchanged with those of Italy, and the Government does every thing to debase and Germanize the country. In the Duchy of Posen, the same object has been pursued, but the actual condition of the people is better; a greater freedom is allowed, and a wish was once expressed by the King of Prussia, that it might be-

come a miniature of the kingdom of Poland. The remonstrances of the other Courts, however, put an end to this liberal policy.

In 1818, the Emperor summoned the first Diet for the kingdom, and his mind not having yet been alarmed by the progress of liberty, matters passed off pretty well. He had, indeed, made a foolish choice of the Grand Duke Constantine to command the army, a choice made with a view, not of vexing the Poles, for in that respect he gave the Emperor more trouble than any other person he could have selected, but to get rid of a troublesome relation from Petersburg. The Grand Duke soon found means of placing at the Council Board creatures of his own, known only for their treachery to Poland, and, being Russians, for their devotion to the Tzar. Constantine united a sort of Viceroyalty over Lithuania, as well as Poland; the first use he made of it was to disperse the University of Wilna, with the learned Lelewel, now Minister, at its head. Prince Czartoryski retired disgusted from the service.

In 1820, another Diet was assembled, in which the Emperor, already haunted by the bugbear of Liberalism, with which Metternich ceased not to terrify him as long as he lived, made the first inroads on the Constitution of his own creation. In fact, the weak-minded Alexander had, with violence to his feelings, stretched his complaisance so far, (when he had a point to gain,) in granting so liberal a charter, that, on reflection, he be-

came himself the first alarmed at his own imprudence, and spent his life in trying, by a dishonourable retractation, to remedy what he thought so great an error; whilst the Poles, sacrificing their long cherished hopes to the certainty of getting something, had reluctantly consented to accept so little, in the patient expectation of one day getting more. Thus, though momentarily united, the two forces instantly began to pull in opposite directions.

The Diet of 1820 gave an opportunity to the Emperor of shewing how much his opinions had changed since the peace. Like a true Autocrat, forgetting that the essence of a Constitutional Monarchy was to allow the honest expression of opinion on the side of the people, as well as of the Sovereign, he by a single decree abolished the publication of the Debates; by another, instituted a rigorous censorship of the press; and interfered, without disguise, in preventing the elections of the most eloquent and popular Nuncios. These measures, as might have been foreseen, produced violent discussions; the Ministry were left in a minority on some of their unconstitutional Bills, (particularly on an attempt to curtail the powers of the jury,) and the Diet separated, with a degree of exasperation against the Emperor which has never been forgotten. In order, as much as possible, to prevent the recurrence of such resistance, the Emperor thought fit to govern without a Diet for five years, although, by his own Charter, and the

custom of Poland, they ought never to have been held at more than the distance of three years at most. In 1825, however, he called another, influenced by the fear that the people would exercise their right of withholding the taxes, had it been deferred any longer.

This assembly passed in sullen silence; the continuance of measures so evidently calculated to introduce despotic government, the increased rigour of the local administration, and the demoralizing system of police, adopted by the Grand Duke Constantine, the Miguel of Russia; the arrival of Russian troops, contrary to the express provisions of Alexander's own Charter, created a degree of discontent, that began to manifest itself in no equivocal manner. The long expected junction with Lithuania, the boon which chiefly induced the Polish nation to submit to the union with Russia, was still denied, and in place of it a puerile expedient of an interchange of certain national colours was offered as an equivalent, a favour which the army, on the motion, in a Military Council, of General Morawski, unanimously spurned. Alexander thought that national feeling only consisted in a cockade, which might be laid down or altered by *oukase*. The abuses and cruelties of the tyrannical Constantine are, it seems, so well known, that I gladly avail myself of that reason for not detailing them.

At this juncture Alexander died. His character will have been understood from the foregoing

pages. Endowed with a certain tact and kindness of manner, he was utterly wanting in that steadiness of design, which might have made him a blessing to the country, by persevering in the liberal system he had once adopted. He wished to do good, but dared not. He wanted, also, that greatness of mind which should have fixed him in the choice of liberal measures, and taught him to resist the insinuations of those who inspired him with distrust of freedom and constitutions. He imagined a Charter to be, like an Inquisition, an engine of State policy, to conciliate the people first by its existence, and as a stimulus to their energies as long as they should be acting in concert with the Sovereign, but totally misconceiving its intention, as granting a right of remonstrance, a wholesome power of timely resistance to the perhaps involuntary encroachments of the Monarch; and, above all, falling into the error of imagining, that, at any future period, it might be modified, changed, or rescinded, by the same *Motus proprius* which (according to *his* theory of the subject) had spontaneously granted it, without consent of the nation, the party most concerned, and who, according to *their* view, had rightfully demanded and exacted it.

Had he condescended to imbue himself with the spirit of the people, to consider himself as the only Russian in Poland, and the only Pole in Russia, instead of vainly attempting to accomplish the visionary idea of a fusion of the two nations, which

all their circumstances imperiously reject; had he, in short, resolved, at the necessary sacrifice of absolute power, which it costs a weak mind so much to abandon, to have recalled the days of the Casimirs and Sigismunds, he might have succeeded in making a brave nation happy, and have gone down to posterity as the greatest Sovereign of his time; but he thought to rule Poland by the sword and the knout, to tie up the intellect of the country, by restricting education and the press; in short, to reduce the Poles to the level of Russians, and he failed. It seems as if, in an absolute Monarchy, the ruler were no wiser than the ruled, as if the Monarch, as well as his subjects, knew no higher state of civilized polity than passive obedience, as if he were himself the dupe of the false system apparently maintained for his sole benefit.

The short period of the reign of the present Emperor has been almost entirely occupied by the proceedings arising out of the events which followed the death of his predecessor. One of the characteristics by which the Russian, and other oriental monarchies, are known in the more distant parts of Europe, in which the public hear but little about them, and have, happily, occasion to interest themselves still less, is, that the Throne seldom receives a new possessor, without being stained with blood. In the present instance, the accession of Nicholas gave an opportunity for the discovery of a plot, the absurdity and wickedness

of which was sufficiently notorious to all Europe. It was matter of satisfaction to those who knew the feelings of the two countries towards each other, to perceive, that not one Polish conspirator was discovered in any way connected with the Russian plot.* But it soon appeared, that the Poles, goaded by far other wrongs than any the Russians had to complain of, and attempting, imprudently indeed, to obtain their redress in a manner and on principles totally different, had united in a secret society for that purpose. The Russian Government had no sooner discovered the circumstance, than they endeavoured to prove the connexion of the two conspiracies for a common purpose, but in vain. The one set of conspirators appear to have been ignorant, if not of the existence, at least of the intentions of the other. Nevertheless, the proceedings taken by Government against those of Poland, were prosecuted with the utmost rigour, and with an utter contempt of all legal forms, as provided for by the very Constitution

* A favourite anecdote with the Grand Duke Constantine, when he wished to show how little the Russians understood liberty, was the following.

At the time of the revolutionary movement at Petersburg, a peasant was asked, why he shouted for the Constitution? Because she is the wife of the Grand Duke Constantine, was the reply. Assuredly, such people could have no views, no ideas of liberty in common with the Poles, although it has been the wish of the Russian Government to pass them off as identical; and a Prince took pleasure in shewing the backward condition of his countrymen!

granted only ten years before, by the Russian Government itself. After being bandied about from Commission to Commission, from Warsaw to Petersburg, and back again, through the fears of the Grand Duke, who thought he could do nothing too arbitrary, could he but convict the accused, the case was brought before the High Constitutional Court, selected from the Senate, before which the Charter had provided for the trial of cases of high treason. The great difficulty then with the Grand Duke, was, to name a President, both sufficiently devoted to him, and exercising influence enough over the other Members, to ensure a capital conviction; but no person on whom he could depend, except those who were too notoriously his creatures, and whom, therefore, he dared not name, could be found for the office. To remedy this defect, he resolved to name as President, some insignificant person of rank; taking care that the next in seniority should be one whose devotion to Russia should exercise a decisive influence on the verdict. He cast his eyes on the Palatine Bielinski, a nobleman of rank, who had filled some honourable, but unimportant offices, who was much respected by the nation, but whose great age and infirmities, and tranquil unobtrusive disposition, seemed sure to yield to the overbearing influence of the Court. But, as usual, the Russian Government, (which, in no part of its dealings with Poland, has ever shewn the slightest capability of understanding

the feelings or principles that actuate a people brought up with ideas of freedom which may almost be called innate, so deeply are they rooted in their character,) deceived itself. Bielinski, perceiving the drift of the Court, in his nomination, was heard to say, that he had made up his mind to die at his post; and with a constancy, never surpassed, the old man was daily conveyed to the Court, in spite of his infirmities, in order that the Presidency should not devolve on a Russian Officer. By this assiduous attention to the duties of his office, he so minutely watched the proceedings, that none of the prisoners could be convicted of more than the fact of having formed these societies, distinct from the constructive offence of which they were accused. But, his exertions cost him his life :* he died soon after, followed to the grave by the blessings of his countrymen. The funeral oration, pronounced by Prince Czartoryski, was a model of eloquence and sound advice, addressed principally to the rising generation, recommending them, above all things, as a *Nation sans Patrie*, to resign themselves to the necessity of obeying existing laws, and of being good subjects to Russia, in order to be, in effect, the better patriots to Poland : and covertly, in a style, easily interpreted by the initiated Poles, but

* According to Russian law, in Poland, every man is liable to be called on to *prove* the negative case, that he does *not* belong to any secret society.

unintelligible to the self-blinded Russians, inculcating the hope, that by such means the great day of regeneration would be prepared, even though the present generation were not allowed by Providence to witness it. The rage of the Government vented itself in a letter of thanks to the Vice President, who gave the only vote in their favour, and in banishing the rest from Court. So much for Russian Justice, and Constitutional Liberty!

The impression produced in Poland by the event of this most important State Trial, was twofold: it shewed the wish of Russia to find the Poles sufficiently implicated in a treasonable conspiracy to justify her in placing restrictions on their liberty, a wish, which, as her conduct openly proved, no sense of justice, no regard for a Constitution of her own granting, could induce her to dissemble, much less to moderate; and it shewed, also, that, arbitrary and illegal as were the measures of the Russian Government, there were yet Poles whose constancy and patriotism were a match for her insidious encroachments. It was the first open test of the success of a system, which, as its results have made it no longer a secret, must here be mentioned, as equally creditable to the patriotism and to the prudence of the nation. For a long time, the spirit of the people, of all classes, had been kept alive by the publication of historical and popular ballads, allegorical poems, and other writings, in which, be-

sides the obvious, there was also a hidden sense.* These easily passed the Russian Censorship, because their meaning was as unintelligible to the minions of despotism, as it was readily interpreted by the sons of liberty.

Immediately after the accession of Nicholas, the Poles had earnestly looked for the Coronation of the Sovereign, as King of Poland, at Warsaw. This ceremony, which to a stranger might appear as the rivetting of their chains, and, therefore, rather to be postponed than desired, was considered in quite another light by the sober patriotism of the nation. They agreed, that the great danger to the nationality (a word expressive of the entire wants) of Poland, was that of being swallowed up, or blended with the ruling power; that as perfect independence was, for the present, quite out of the question, the greatest object yet within their reach was to have the Russian fragments of their country united under one administrative system, but with no other resemblance or connexion whatever with Russia, than that the chief magistrate of both countries should be the same person. This, supposing always the Russian Government in Poland to have been what it never was, just, friendly, and constitutional; with a perfect freedom of intercourse with

* Niemcewicz, now Minister, was the author of the most popular of these poems, which recalled the ancient glories of Poland, and were set to the national airs.

the other dismembered portions, a thing often promised by all three Governments, but never performed; constituted the *summum bonum* of the hopes of the present generation of patriots. The rest they left safely to their posterity, whom they may be said to have educated, and still to educate, for no other end and purpose. This is the principle and object of all their improvements, all their writings, all their studies: open or concealed, it is never wanting. The Coronation had been so long deferred by Alexander, that the Poles had begun to suspect that it was intended, after all, to reduce them to a mere province; and the absence of any *Corps Diplomatique*, except three or four agents of the powers, too much interested in their affairs, and, therefore, regarded as spies, tended to confirm them in this idea. Before the State Trial was well concluded, the Turkish war broke out; and these two causes contributed to delay the Coronation of the new Emperor and King, till at last the nation imagined, that as a succession had taken place, without either the former or the latter King having paid them this compliment, their chance of the acknowledgment of their separate existence was a mere shadow.

At length a Coronation was resolved upon; and, after much hesitation in the Councils of the Emperor, it was decided that it should be without a Diet; a determination, which is said to have

caused great joy to His Imperial Majesty's Ministers, who have a particular dislike to the language usually held by a Polish Diet, when not in good humour. This decision, however, was peculiarly displeasing to the Poles, who had looked forward to it as an opportunity of stating their grievances, and who remembered, that, according to the old constitution of their country, no King, though elected, could mount the throne, until the Coronation Diet had presented to him, and he had accepted the *Pacta Conventa*, or Charter, which they had prepared for him. The ceremony passed off in melancholy magnificence; past recollections were sad, and future prospects not cheering. The distant reserve of the Emperor, his evident unwillingness to accept the Crown as part only of the Constitution, or indeed to undergo the ceremony at all; his refusal to be crowned by the Primate of the kingdom; his rudeness to some of the Senators, natural in the Sovereign of a country, where a drummer is thought more of than a Magistrate; and some fresh and public brutalities of the Grand Duke, completed the alienation of the people.

This unsatisfactory Coronation was succeeded by the Diet of last year, in which the Sovereign and people met, mutually suspicious of each other; and nothing having been done, either to forward the re-union with Lithuania and the Ukraine, to remove the unpopular person, or to diminish the unconstitutional power of the Grand

Duke,* to restore the liberty of the press, or to draw off the Russian military, who were, contrary to law, stationed in Warsaw, they separated, mutually dissatisfied. So far from the late explosion having been a surprise upon the Russian Government, it seems incredible, notwithstanding their usual blindness, with regard to the working of Polish feeling, that they should not have foreseen it, more especially as their own immediate acts seem to have been specially calculated to produce the effect, for the purpose of affording a pretext for putting an end to the smothered ill blood, which was every day increasing, and the Constitution together.

The foregoing statement, which does not, however, comprise the hundredth part of the vexations of Poland from her various oppressors, nor the many obscure, but not useless attempts at resistance, on the part of her sons, is sufficient to account for the late enthusiastic insurrection.

It has been shewn, that the freedom, as well as the independence, to which Poland aspires, are not like the doubtful longings of some other nations, to acquire a benefit which they know only by description, but are qualities which they have never ceased to regret, and never lost the hope of regaining. It has been shewn, that the nobler

* Constantine, when he wished to press a conviction, has been known to change the judges four times, before he could obtain it. If this tells much against the tyrant, it tells something for the Magistracy.

attributes of Poland, her independence, her Constitution, her hereditary succession, her internal liberty, her toleration, freedom of the press, of trade, her learning, her military greatness, are all ancient, original, and truly national qualities, that her elective Monarchy, her villenage, the excess of liberty among the nobles, and want of it among the lower classes, and the anarchy consequent on such a system, the Jesuitical restrictions on opinion and learning, her stormy Diets, lawless confederations, the *liberum veto*, foreign intrigues, and political weakness, are modern abuses, and not to be taken as characteristics of the nation, though they have grievously hurt her reputation in Europe. The good, however, predominates over the bad, both because many of the bad qualities were only good principles pushed to excess, and because, having lasted barely two centuries, the nation had never been thoroughly corrupted.

It is necessary to observe, that, although as completely disorganized as it was possible for a nation to be, compared with the perfect discipline and mechanical obedience of her invaders, though without a regular army, without roads, custom-houses, or a tolerably efficient system of financial or internal administration, Poland was never a demoralized country. Every individual, as his pride prevented him from lending his obedience to his neighbour for the public good, did his utmost in a private capacity for the national safety. Where individual exertion could effect any thing, they

performed wonders, and history does not record more disinterested sacrifices, or greater bravery. Where collective force was required, they were powerless. Every Pole thought the safety of the country depended upon his Palatinate, his troops, his village, or even himself.*

One particular feature in the Polish character, is, that they are, though candid towards foreigners, very severe judges of one another. This, perhaps, is the only remaining trace of their ancient readiness to engage in feuds among themselves, but it has the good effect of establishing a strict watch over each other's actions. The moment a man's conduct assumes a doubtful character, he is branded as a traitor, a deserter, even though his previous character may have established a good reason for confidence in his patriotism. Many have thus been held up to popular infamy, for whom there were reasonable grounds for excuse, and who have subsequently cleared themselves. And it is remarkable, that innumerable instances have occurred where persons who had previously passed for being timid, lukewarm, or unsteady

* Polonais, que ceux d'entre vous qui veulent justifier leur insouciance pour les affaires publiques par la position pénible, dant laquelle ils se trouvent, apprennent par l'exemple de Mokronoski que dans aucune circonstance les efforts des citoyens pour servir leur patrie, ne restent inutiles, et que si l'on ne peut faire pour elle tout ce que l'on désire, ne rien faire, c'est se rendre véritablement coupable.... le devoir d'un citoyen est de chercher à bien faire, les résultats ne dépendent pas de nous.—*Eloge de Mokronoski par Stan. Potocki.*

patriots, when circumstances have drawn them from obscurity, have proved themselves as staunch defenders of their country's liberties, as those who had shone in the most conspicuous situations. Even the confederators of Targowica are half absolved by Oginski,* and their sons have been distinguished ornaments to the patriotic cause.

What would be the feelings of an English proprietor, could he not go from his estate in Yorkshire to one in Devonshire, without waiting months for a passport from two Governments, and, when received, to find his route specified as if for a prisoner of war, his time limited, and a prohibition to visit the capital? So is it in Poland. Disgusted with this treatment, many have made themselves citizens of Cracow, which has become a true focus of liberalism.

Such was the undeserved fate of unhappy Poland, of a country which, having run an honourable course for ages, whose peculiar glory it is, that, when powerful, she never used her arms for the injury of her neighbours, while she repeatedly spent her blood in their defence, torn, as it were, limb from limb, by powers immeasurably her inferiors† in all but force. Such was the fate of one

* Oginski's Memoirs. This work gives the best account of the conduct of the Poles, from the third partition to the restoration under Alexander, and curious details of the policy and sentiments of that Prince.

† Substituting Russia for Spain, and Poland for South America, the following is literally correct :

of the leading nations of Europe, and such will be the fate of all those which fall within the reach of Russian aggression. Such was the fate of the Crimea, for the *independence* of which Russia provoked a Turkish war, and, within ten years after, took possession of it as a province. Such was the fate of Finland under the religious Alexander, and such will be the constant effect of Russian supremacy, under whatever hypocritical Sovereign the blasphemy of a Holy Alliance may be re-produced. It is worth while studying what were the principles which so long upheld the tottering State, and have, at last, led to its partial re-establishment.

We have shewn that the good qualities of the Polish character were ancient, original, and of long standing, while its defects, as well as those

“ He who should reason by analogy, from the fate (condition) of Spain, to that of South America would confound two things essentially dissimilar. Were he to suppose that the cry of *Viva la Independencia* in the one, and *Viva la Constitucion* in the other, are indicative of an equal degree of sincerity, and of right apprehension of the subject, he would be greatly in error The greater number of those people in Spain who called out for the Constitution, knew very imperfectly what they were asking for; whereas, every individual in South America, however ignorant of the true nature and extent of civil liberty, is strongly possessed of the same clear, consistent, and steady conception of what National Independence means, and well knows its important practical consequences.” — *Captain Hall's South America, Vol. 2.*

of the State, were modern, and of foreign introduction. Those very defects, that weakness which ensured ultimate failure, proceeded not from the corruptions of luxury and demoralization, as in Italy or Portugal, but from excess of individual liberty and independence of character, qualities which led to a noble and protracted struggle, though incapable of making head against superior force. The question was not with them, as with the Belgians, "To whom shall we belong?" but shall we exist or not, as a nation. Poland, in the whole course of its previous history, had never been enslaved, never even conquered; so that the idea of being other than Poles, is even yet unintelligible to the nation. Their example, and that of Spain, shews how much more ready to fight for liberty are those nations who have really known, either by actual experience, or long cherished tradition, what true liberty is, than those who know it only as a philosophical theory, deduced from abstract speculation, or classical literature.

Whatever were the defects of the Polish system of polity, it could never be accused of too little liberty; that liberty, on the contrary, went on encreasing till the last stage of its existence. It was the very extreme of liberty; a country without any regular taxes, customs, passports, where no man could be imprisoned till after conviction, where even the Catholic Clergy were liberal, and perfect toleration established earlier than in any other part of Europe; where Ministers were

named for life, Judges placed beyond controul of the Crown, and treaties and matters of State submitted to the popular representatives; where those representatives were but delegates, obliged to receive instructions, and report their conduct to their constituents; where the constitutional Aristocracy were a mere council; orders and titles contrary to law; entails and primogeniture almost unknown; and from republican principle, no sort of honour, from the throne to the starosties or pensions in land, allowed to be hereditary; and lastly, where every King was elected; and, on his Coronation, obliged to swear to a new Charter, prepared according to the circumstances of the times; and where unanimity of the Diet was requisite to pass any law; and where revolt was legal:—such a country to pass under the iron sceptre of an empire, where all is hopeless slavery! Consider this picture, and you see the principle of resistance; consider the power and means employed by Russia, and you see the causes of her success. Poland yielded from want of organization to resist; Russia succeeded by a force, in which European organization directed a system of oriental slavery. The Poles, it is true, were credulous; so are most honest men: while the atrocious falsehood, violence, and injustice of Russia, and her allies, were such as no example had been found of in history; and having once been exhibited to the world, will, it may be hoped, prevent it from ever putting faith

in the promises of irresponsible Governments, or the good-will of military despotism.

It now remains only to be considered what is the situation of Poland at the present moment, what are her prospects, and what the duties of Europe towards her. Her actual situation is that of a country, which, though not rich, has been gradually improving in agriculture, a few simple manufactures, in education, and other branches of civilization, roads, bridges, and military organization, ever since the first erection of the Duchy of Warsaw, in 1806. The campaign of 1812-13 was a considerable check to this prosperity; and although the peace restored order, and a fixed system of Government, yet that Government was not friendly to the real increase of the prosperity and resources of Poland, as that of the King of Saxony had been, because it feared to increase the strength of an already disaffected dependency.* Add to this a national character of the sort above described, easily excited, but never

* The Russian Government boast of having spent great sums on the improvement of Poland: if they are Polish money, Poland could have done as much without them; if Russian, Poland must be, as, like the other Russian conquests, she really is, a drain upon Russia. Perhaps the Government may now regret having bestowed such pains on the army, which has obtained such a reputation for discipline, that even an American officer came to serve in it, and was lately aide de camp to Constantine.

The army at present amounts to 80,000 regulars,—300,000 of a sort of national volunteers.

failing to make good, as far as possible, by deeds, what it has advanced in words; a patriotism above all suspicion; wrongs, and traditions of wrongs, far beyond the memory of man; and a firm conviction, founded on a long experience of trials, moral and physical, borne with almost incredible patience, that it is in vain to look for a redress of those wrongs to Powers, who have not only lately rewarded their confidence with insincerity, but have never done otherwise; add that she was systematically borne down by a distant and foreign Government, the administration of which was committed to the most tyrannical agents, high as well as low; a courage never disputed; and a religious and unconquerable persuasion, that Poland is some day to rise again to her ancient independence, by the means of every individual who sheds his blood for, on her own or on foreign soil.* To a deep reflective cast of mind, where liberty or politics are concerned, the Poles join a romance of character which is quite peculiar to themselves, unless, perhaps, the Spaniards may afford another example of it. The Cossacks of the Ukraine, (Polish Cossacks,) whom Napoleon, betraying the cause of liberty while he affected to encourage it, led to waste their blood in fighting against the independence of Spain, carried about

* Even the hitherto unwarlike Jews have raised a military corps among themselves. Their animosity against the Russian Government is extreme, on account of its numerous persecutions of their body.

them bits of their native earth, with which they wished to die, that even in the grave they might not be separated. At the time of the partition the Regalia were secretly conveyed away from Cracow, and are now known to be buried in an obscure province, never to re-appear till Poland has a King of her own. On raising the great tumulus, which records the glories of Kosciuszko, the scene of his battles was resorted to, for earth appropriate to the monument.

But it may be asked, has Poland no chance of assistance from without, and no right to claim it in this righteous struggle? Is she not, of herself, so weak as to be in need of it? She has one great negative principle of support in the feelings of the population of those provinces without the limits of the kingdom, incorporated with the three neighbouring States. These cannot lend her any active assistance at first, but afford a refuge for the helpless, and a reserve for the future, besides neutralizing much of the force and the cares of her enemies. The Prussian and Austrian people, and even the Government of the latter, are far from disliking any thing that may embarrass their colossal neighbour. Each has enough to do to hold their own. The distant parts of their ill-assorted possessions demand all their attention. The troubled accession of the Emperor, the disgraceful failure of the first campaign in Turkey, with the details and causes of both, with which the Poles are better acquainted than we

can be, have shewn them, that Russia, how great soever her material power, or her defensive resources, does not rest on so sure a basis, nor is she so certain of her blow, as she would appear to those who see her from a distance.

The first power to which Poland will look for assistance, is France. Their late connexion, the shame still felt by France, at having been profaned by Barbarian invasion, and the circumstances of the moment, render it natural, that France should lend a willing ear to the solicitations of Poland. There has always been a certain degree of connexion between the two nations, which has made them known to each other, although it has been productive of little good to either party. Henri de Valois did not suit them as a King, and the Poles were too fond of liberty to suit the blood of the Medici. The greatest misfortune of the gallant, open-hearted Sobieski, was his being married to a French intrigante of the Court of Louis XIV., as may be seen by his letters. The unfeeling conduct of Louis XV. to his father-in-law, Stanislas Leszczyński, and the equally disgraceful abandonment of the interests of Poland at the time of the partitions, when France thought it better to foment petty jealousies with England, than restore an ally to her merited independence; the subsequent heartless policy of Napoleon to a devoted people, whose character his own was not great enough to appreciate, have little claim on the gratitude of Poland.

France, therefore, may be said to owe a three-fold debt to Poland ; first, in having tamely suffered her to be dismembered ; secondly, in having so tardily and imperfectly accomplished her restoration, which, after all, was the work of Dombrowski, rather than of Napoleon ; thirdly, in reaping, at the present moment, the full and complete advantage of her position as a bulwark between her and Russia, and a neutralizer of any combination between the Powers of Germany, which could tend to the disadvantage of France. The slow and ungracious recognition of the French Monarch by Russia, shews sufficiently what she might expect, did not Poland stand in the breach. The positive benefit to France is as great as if it were the stipulation of a treaty. Her duty, her interest, her inclination, is plain ; has she not also the power of putting them in execution ? France, by possessing a vast standing army, necessary, in part, for her own defence, can easily, by a comparatively small reinforcement, render disposable a military force for distant objects. To a country so situated, with a population wanting employment, it is as easy to send an army across the Continent, as for us to send a fleet to the West Indies. In the present case, France, who has so often had all Europe against her, would speedily find co-operation and assistance. In fact, the benefit to the whole Continent of checking the progress of Russia, that great public nuisance of Europe, would be cheaply purchased by heavy

sacrifices. Those who believe that Russia means to rest content with her present Asiatic and European boundaries, are blind to the evidence of experience, and deaf to the lessons of history. No Russian thinks it necessary to profess such an absurdity—none of the neighbouring nations give credit to it. But it is pleasing to see that the nations are rising to pluck from the Jay his borrowed plumes; Finland, Turkey, and Persia, wait but the moment to revenge themselves.

At the time of the partition of 1772, our Government were either profoundly ignorant, or remiss, in regard to Continental politics. The non-intervention then followed, as now recommended, is a good principle, when it leads to good results; but like other negative rules, its benefits depend on its application. But the old system of policy was to think more of Potentates than of nations; the balance of power was thought to be preserved, when the spoilers had made an equal division of the booty, however acquired. Our growing disputes with America form the only available excuse for the apathy of the Government of that day, and it is but a bad one. Again, in 1793 and 95, England was too much alarmed at the progress of the French Revolution, and the Coalition, to turn her attention to Poland; thus, by being always drawn into an unwise, if not an unjust war, at an unlucky time, we lost the honourable distinction of contributing, at least, as we might have done, to see justice done to

others. And whatever may happen to Poland now, should Russia prevail, she will, as she always has, seize the opportunity of a moment of general alarm in Europe, to consummate the ruin of that unfortunate nation. We now see, that while we were fighting, blindly, in a war of very doubtful policy, the three Powers, whose game we were unconsciously made to play, took advantage of the mutual occupation of England and France in a destructive war, to secure their own aggressions on Poland.

And when, at a later period, at the Congress of Vienna, the fairest opening that it was possible to conceive for the reparation of our fault, for replacing the key-stone of the political arch of Europe, and conciliating France, at that moment unable to act, our Minister breathed a hint of the restoration of Poland; immediately the great military Powers, who, previously, could not put a regiment on foot, without England, and her subsidies, produced, at least on paper, a million of men ready to maintain their spoliations. Our Government thought it worth while, for the sake of a promise of commercial advantages, which was immediately evaded, an irregular addition to Hanover, the erection of the kingdom of the Netherlands, wherein their foresight is now put to the test, and a nugatory treaty for the purpose of abolishing a slave trade which continues to this hour, not only to abstain from interfering in the allotment of Poland, but actually to acquiesce in

the establishment of a slavery in Europe, both of mind and body, which no one who has not visited Warsaw, can form an idea of.

The oppressions of the Russian Government, their prying and demoralizing police, have driven all the chief families to reside in the country, except the few persons whose business retains them in Warsaw. Russia has done all in her power, but in vain, to lure them, by empty titles and decorations, to marshal themselves among her slaves;* they prefer residing on their estates, where, mingling with the numerous country gentlemen of smaller fortune, with which an agricultural country abounds, they have, in silence and obscurity, educated their families to do honour to their country, whether peace or war be its fortune. Those who can obtain permission, which is not easy, travel abroad, to escape from the spies who haunt them at home, and even in foreign travel find various ways of being useful to their

* Ruhlière, whose work is worth studying, were it not only for the sake of the profound knowledge it displays of the character and general policy of Russia, and particularly with regard to Poland and Greece, says, speaking of the Russian servility:—

“Czar et Dieu ne forment dans leurs esprits qu’une même idée. La volonté du maître devient la seule règle du bien et du mal. Ces hommes n’osant ni penser ni agir d’après eux-mêmes, ne s’engageront et ne parleront jamais qu’avec des réserves perfides. Voilà ce que devinrent les Russes. La volonté du Czar fut leur unique loi, et son intérêt leur unique morale.”—*Anarchie de Pologne, Tom. I.*

country. Some benefit by foreign schools, or enter into foreign services; others seek documents relating to the history of their country in foreign archives, or disclose to other nations the secrets of their prison-house, which else would never pass the brazen wall that seems to cut off Poland from intellectual intercourse with the rest of Europe. The late order of the Russian Government to its subjects at Paris, commanding the Russians to come home, but the Poles to stay away, shews pretty clearly the different estimate made of their respective characters by the Imperial Cabinet.

The die is now cast, and the hasty vengeance which the Emperor seems resolved to take, has left no time for an attempt at negociation, which at first seemed to offer many chances of success. Could Russia be yet, by an amicable mediation, persuaded to change her system, to re-unite her provinces, retract her unconstitutional decrees, absolve Turkey from her debt, on receiving Wallachia and Moldavia, to be immediately exchanged with Austria for Gallicia, which might then be incorporated with Poland; at the same time holding out to the Duchy of Posen the prospect of a similar re-union, whenever an equivalent could be found for Prussia, the interests of Europe would be benefited, and an injured State raised, without bloodshed, one step higher in its progress to restoration. Prussia and Austria hold their portions but to be bargained for. Nor would Russia be too much strengthened by it. When

your enemy has a thorn in his side, the larger it is, the more will he be incommoded by it.

If, then, an opportunity is afforded us, almost beyond what the most sanguine hope could have imagined, of repairing a political fault, of aiding a gallant nation to recover her freedom and independence, qualities which we so highly prize ourselves, and of which, it is at least in part our fault that she ever was deprived; will it not seem almost a dereliction of duty, not to use our influence in preventing the destruction of a nation, which our Diplomacy* helped to place in its present state of subjection? Should not an honourable emulation prompt us, not to be outdone in the race of political virtue, for such it is, by France, whose sympathy with Poland is but that of a fortuitous companionship in arms, while the connexion of Poland with England would be based on the surer foundation of a similar love of constitutional liberty? Unlike the French, in none of their revolutions have the Poles insulted the Cross, defaced the national arms, changed their colours, or degraded the throne. Their nobility is not guilty of having produced a Mirabeau, their populace a Robespierre, or their army a Napoleon. Unlike the

* England is always in request when the sanction of her name is wanted to an iniquitous treaty, and equally disregarded at other times. If she has not the power of a trustee to ask a question respecting the fulfilment of contracts, to which she lent the credit of her name, her signature is a disgraceful mockery.

French, who seem ashamed of the glories of Francis I. and Henri IV., they are remarkable for their attachment to the ancient symbols, forms, names, and traditions of their Casimirs and their Sigismunds, as we to those of our Edwards and our Henrys; and perhaps with greater reason. We might raise up to ourselves a powerful, and, if national character is to be relied on, a sincere friend in war, who will otherwise be in the hands of our enemies; and a mutually useful intercourse, which its present Government forbids, might exist between us in peace. But we are tied up by a debt, which those who contracted it were not clever enough to bequeath us the means of paying: contracted to subsidize hireling Princes, the first to desert us, when our interests were not identified with theirs. In a crisis of reform, of all kinds, we must be content to leave the first post in this honourable undertaking to France, happy to be on such terms with that regenerated country as to be able to engage in the same enterprises, and maintain hand in hand the same principles. But, let us follow with earnestness and honour; a fleet in the Baltic and the Euxine, may shew that Britain does not sleep. Let us remember, that Poland has often armed for the protection, never for the invasion of the liberties of Europe; that, had she existed twenty years ago, in integrity and independence, Napoleon would never have marched to Moscow, nor Alexander to Paris.

The French Government, which knows the value of a demonstration, political as well as military, has lost no time in despatching an Ambassador to Petersburg, both in order to leave the Russian Cabinet no sort of pretence for alleging ignorance of her sentiments on the subject of Poland, and for the sake of giving an indirect encouragement to the Poles themselves, whatever be the ulterior measures she intends to pursue.

The sentiments of the British Government at the Congress, were such as, if persisted in, would have done honour to the Cabinet which dictated them; but the weakness with which they were abandoned to the imperious declarations of Russia, annihilates the merit of their intention. Alexander himself acknowledged their justice, but added, that they were unsuitable to his views; and, as he was Lord of the Congress, his views were paramount to all others. In return, however, he promised a unity of national privileges, even to the dismembered portions, which he illustrated by a recommendation to each to submit to their new Sovereigns; the King of Prussia declaring, he meant to make his widely scattered dominions uniform in every possible respect.

By an additional article to the Charter, the Emperor assumed the power of *modifying it according to circumstances*.

Thus was the benevolent intention of England evaded, and the signature of her Representative made use of to place a worthy and respectable nation under the most cruel, because the most refined, des-

potism. England was held up to the Poles as desiring their welfare, by placing them in the hands of Russia; but is it to be supposed that her Minister would have added his sanction to the transfer, could he have foreseen the use that was to be made of it? He intended to have made the Poles a free, if not independent nation; his professed wish was not to add Provinces to Russia, but to erect barriers against her. The Allies should, themselves, have made a Constitution for Poland, with the co-operation of the Polish nation, and then have permitted her junction with Russia. We now see the value Russia sets upon British diplomacy; it is made first her tool, and then, amused with words, it is utterly scouted and despised.

Better had it been, had England withheld, obstinately, her approval of any arrangement for Poland, save her total re-establishment. Poland could not have fared worse, and England's recorded disapproval would have saved her from what history will register as a glaring political disgrace. Austria would have gladly joined in such a measure, but that would not have suited Russia. That Power, whenever she could not succeed in obtaining the whole of Poland for herself, has always contrived to implicate her neighbours in the robbery, and by tempting Austria and Prussia with small baits, has nailed them to her cause. Had Russia and Prussia divided Poland alone, Austria would have been free and willing to oppose them; but as it is, she is tied to their line of policy.

When England lends her name to great arrangements, involving the happiness of millions, is she a cypher? or has she no trusteeship—no right of enquiring whether the conditions which she ratifies are fulfilled?—whether her advocacy, in the first instance, of Polish freedom, and her taking on herself, subsequently, to recommend to the nation the acceptance of a diminished independence, as the utmost that could be obtained?—whether, in case of the adoption of her first proposal, but infinitely more in that of the second, she did not offer to Poland, before the world, a virtual guarantee that the stipulations ratified by her Minister should be executed, is a question which those in power can best decide. It is, however, satisfactory to reflect, that opportunity may occur, in which a strong Government may take up the plans which the weakness of their predecessors has led them to abandon. That the British Government of the day were mainly culpable towards Poland, is but too evident;* the only remedy yet in our power, is, by timely negociation to procure the just fulfilment of the rights of an unfortunate people, whose cause we only seemed to take up, in order to turn them over to their oppressors.

Regna, sed non impera.

* See the “ Charter of the Kingdom of Poland, with Observations on Lord Castlereagh’s Negotiations at Vienna, and on the Articles broken by Russia.”—*Just published by Ridgway.*

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